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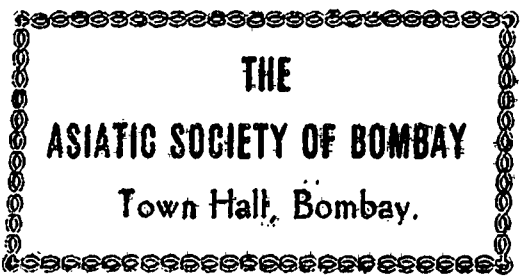


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# THEOLOGY,

EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED,

IN

# A SERIES OF SERMONS:

BY

TIMOTHY DWIGHT, S. T. D. LL. D.

LATE PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE

WITH

A Memoir

OF

THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

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# SERMON CV.

## THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

### THE PERPETUITY OF THE SABBATH.

*Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.*—EXOD. xx. 8—11.

THE command which is given us in this passage of Scripture, requires no explanation. I shall therefore proceed immediately to the consideration of the great subject which it presents to our view under the following heads:

I. *The perpetual establishment of the sabbath;* and,

II. *The manner in which it is to be observed.*

I. *I shall endeavour to prove the perpetual establishment of the sabbath in the Scriptures.*

This subject I propose to consider at length; and, in the course of my examination, *shall attempt to offer direct proof of its perpetuity,* and *then to answer objections.*

In direct proof of the perpetuity of this institution I allege,

I. *The text.*

The text is one of the commands of the *moral law.* Now it is acknowledged, that the moral law is, in the most universal sense, binding on men of every age and every country. If then this command be a part of that

law, all mankind must be under immoveable obligations to obey the injunctions which it contains.

That it is a part of the moral law I argue from the fact, *that it is united with the other commands which are acknowledged to be of this nature.* It is twice placed in the midst of the decalogue in the context, and in the fifth of Deuteronomy. This fact, you will remember, was the result of design, and not of accident: a design formed and executed by God himself, and not by Moses.

I argue it, also, from the fact, *that this command, together with the remaining nine, was spoken with an awful and audible voice from the midst of the thunders and lightnings which enveloped Mount Sinai.* The splendour and majesty of this scene were such, that *all the people who were in the camp trembled. And when they saw the thunderings and lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking they removed, and stood afar off: and said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.* Even Moses himself *exceedingly feared and quaked.*

I argue this doctrine also from the fact, that *this command was written by the finger of God on one of the two tables of stone, originally prepared by himself, and destined to contain nothing but this and the other precepts of the decalogue.* It was afterward written again by the same hand, after these tables were broken on one of two similar tables prepared by Moses. A table of stone, and a pillar of stone, were, in ancient times, direct symbols of the perpetuity of whatever was engraved on them. This very natural symbol God was pleased to adopt in the present case, to shew the perpetual obligation of these commands. The remainder of the law, given by Moses, was all written in a book; and was here intentionally and entirely distinguished, as to its importance, from the decalogue. *The tables of stone on which these commands were written, were fashioned by the hand of God himself.* This, also, forms a peculiar article of distinction between the decalogue and the rest of the Jewish law. Nothing but the decalogue ever received such an honour as this. It was written on one of these tables by the finger of God. This also is a distinction peculiar to the decalogue.

When Moses, in his zeal to destroy the idolatry of the Israelites, had broken the two tables of stone, fashioned and written upon in this manner, God directed him to make two other tables of stone like the first. *On these he was pleased to write the same commands a second time.* In this act he has taught us, that he was pleased to become a second time the recorder of these precepts with his own hand, rather than that the entire distinction between these precepts and others should be obliterated.

Every part of this solemn transaction, it is to be remembered, was *the result of contrivance and design; of contrivance and design on the part of God himself.* Every part of it, therefore, speaks a language which is to be examined and interpreted by us. Now let me ask whether this language is not perfectly intelligible and perfectly unambiguous. Is it not clear beyond every rational debate, that God designed to distinguish these precepts from every other part of the Mosaic law, both as to their superior importance, and their perpetuity? Is it not incredible, that God should mark in so solemn a manner this command, together with the remaining nine, unless he intended that all to whom these precepts should come, that is, all Jews and Christians, or all who should afterward read the Scriptures, should regard these commands as possessing that very importance which he thus significantly gave them: should consider them as being in a peculiar sense his law; and hold them as being perpetually and universally obligatory?

It is farther to be remembered, that *this command is delivered in the same absolute manner as the other nine.* There is no limitation to the phraseology in which it is contained. *Honour thy father and thy mother,* is obligatory on all children to whom this precept shall come. *Thou shalt not steal,* is a precept prohibiting the stealing of every man who shall know it. Every *Gentile* as well as every *Jew who sinneth under the law, will,* according to the spirit of the apostle's declaration, *be judged by the law.* Agreeably to this equitable construction, every person to whom this precept shall come, is bound to *remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy.*

But it is acknowledged, that "all the remaining com-

mands are indeed universally obligatory; being in their own nature moral, and having therefore a universal application to mankind. This however is plainly a command merely positive, and therefore destitute of this universality of application. It may of course be dispensed with; may be supposed to have been delivered to the Jews only, like their ceremonial and judicial law; may have been destined to continue so long as their national state continued; and thus may have been designed to be of neither universal nor perpetual obligation."

To this objection, which I have stated at full length that I might be sure of doing justice to it, I give the following answer.

First: It appears to me evident, that, so far as my information extends, the distinction between moral and positive commands, has been less clearly made by moral writers than most other distinctions. It will be impossible for any man clearly to see and to limit exactly what they intend when they use these terms. To remove this difficulty, so far as my audience are concerned, and to enable them to know what I design while I am using these words, I will attempt to define them with some particularity.

*A moral precept* is one which regulates the moral conduct of intelligent creatures, and binds the will and the conscience. It is either limited or universal; it is universal, or, in other words, is obligatory on the consciences of intelligent creatures, at all times, and in all circumstances, when their situations and relations are universally such as to render the conduct required in these precepts their duty invariably and in the nature of things. Of this kind the number of precepts is certainly very small. We are bound to love God and our neighbour invariably. But the *fifth command*, in its obvious sense, can have no application where the relations of parent and child do not exist; *the sixth*, where rational beings are immortal; *the seventh*, where the distinction of sex is not found. To these precepts, therefore, the criterion of universality, generally regarded as the principal mark of the moral nature of precepts, is plainly inapplicable; and it is altogether probable, that these precepts will have no existence in any world

but this. Limited moral precepts are those, which require the duties, arising from such relations and circumstances, as exist only for limited periods, or among certain classes or divisions of rational beings. Thus various moral precepts found in the judicial law of Moses, obligated to obedience none but the people of that nation, and strangers dwelling among them. Thus also, he who has no parents, is not required to perform the duties enjoined upon a child; he who has no wife, those required of a husband; and he who has no children, those demanded of a father.

*Positive precepts* are such as require conduct of moral beings, which, antecedently to the promulgation of them, was not their duty; and independently of them, would never have become their duty; but would have remained for ever a matter of indifference. It ought to be observed here, that some precepts are considered as merely positive, because the duties enjoined by them were unknown, and would have continued unknown to those of whom they are required, independently of the publication of the precepts. These precepts, however, are no less of a moral nature, than if the duties which they enjoin, and the relations from which those duties spring, had always been perfectly known. A precept of a merely positive nature, creates a duty which, but for the precept, would not exist; which does not depend for its existence on the nature of the relations sustained by the subject as a rational being; but is intended to promote some useful, incidental purpose; and is not due nor demanded from the subject in other cases, although sustaining exactly the same relations. Thus the precept, requiring the building of booths at the Passover, may be considered as a positive precept. Thus also many others, enjoining particular parts of the Jewish ritual.

Secondly: The precept contained in the text is, according to these definitions, a moral, and not a positive precept. The sabbath was instituted for the following ends.

It was intended to give the laborious classes of mankind an opportunity of resting from toil.

It was intended to be a commemoration of the wisdom, power, and goodness, of God, in the creation of the universe.

It was intended to furnish an opportunity of increasing holiness in man, while in a state of innocence.

It was intended to furnish an opportunity to fallen man of acquiring holiness, and of obtaining salvation.

In every one of these respects, the sabbath is equally useful, important, and necessary to every child of Adam. It was no more necessary to a Jew to rest after the labour of six days was ended, than to any other man. It was no more necessary to a Jew to commemorate the perfections of God, displayed in the work of creation; it was no more necessary to a Jew to gain holiness, or to increase it; it is no more necessary to a Jew to seek or to obtain salvation. Whatever makes either of these things interesting to a Jew in any degree, makes them in the same degree interesting to every other man. The nature of the command, therefore, teaches as plainly as the nature of a command can teach, that it is of universal application to mankind. It has then this great criterion of a moral precept; *viz.* universality of application.

That it is the duty of all men to commemorate the perfections of God displayed in the work of creation, cannot be questioned. Every living man is bound to contemplate, understand, and adore, these perfections. But we cannot know them in the abstract, or as they exist merely in him. We learn them only as displayed in his works, and in his word. We are bound, therefore, to learn them as thus displayed, and that in proportion to the clearness and glory of the display. The clearness and glory with which these perfections are manifested in the work of creation, are transcendantly great; and demand from all creatures a contemplation proportionally attentive, and an adoration proportionally exalted. To commemorate this glorious work, therefore, is a plain and important duty of all men: this being the peculiar service demanded of them by his character, and his relation to them as their Creator. But this commemoration was the original and supreme object of the command. It cannot be denied that this is a moral service, nor that the precept requiring it is a moral precept.

To perform this service in the best manner is also as much a moral duty, as to perform it at all. If any duty be not per-

formed in the best manner; it is only performed in part: the remainder being of course omitted. But no words can be necessary to prove, that we are equally obliged to perform one part of a duty as another.

If we know not, and cannot know, the best manner; we are invariably bound to choose the best which we do know. If, however, the best manner be made known to us; we are invariably obliged to adopt it, to the exclusion of all others.

The best manner, in the present case, is made known to us in this command. We are assured, that it is the best manner by the fact, that God has chosen it. No man can doubt whether God's manner is the best, nor whether it is his own duty to adopt it rather than any other. This manner is a commemoration of the perfections of God, thus disclosed on one day in seven.

That a particular day or set time should be devoted to this important purpose, is indispensable. The duty is a social one, in which the rational creatures of God, in this world, are universally to unite. But unless a particular day were set apart for this duty, the union intended would be impossible.

It is of the last importance, that the day should be appointed by GOD. Men would not agree on any particular day. If they should agree, it would always be doubtful whether the time chosen by them was the best; and the day, appointed by men, would have neither authority, sacredness, nor sanction. In a matter merely of human institution, all who pleased would dissent; and in such a world as ours, most, or all, would choose to dissent. The whole duty, therefore, would be left undone; and the glorious perfections of God, unfolded in the work of creation, would be wholly forgotten. This precept is also entirely of a moral nature, as to the whole end at which it aims, so far as man is concerned. This end is the attainment and the increase of holiness. Of every man living, and of every man alike, this is the highest interest, and the highest duty. To this end as to the former, which is indeed inseparably united with this, the sabbath is indispensable.

The sabbath is eminently moral, also, as the indispensable means of preserving in the world a real and voluntary obedience of all the other commands in the decalogue.

Wherever the sabbath is not, religion dies of course, and morality of every kind, except so far as convenience and selfishness may keep the forms of it alive, is forgotten. But all those means, which are indispensable to the existence of morality, or, in better language, religion, are themselves of a moral nature, and of universal obligation; since without them nothing moral could exist.

It makes no difference, here, whether we could have known without information from God, that one day in seven would be the best time, and furnish the best manner of performing these things, or not. It is sufficient that we know it now.

Thus *the fourth command* is of a really moral nature, no less than the others; and as truly of incalculable importance, and indispensable obligation, to all the children of Adam. Its place in the decalogue therefore, was given it with consummate propriety; and *what God hath joined together let not man put asunder.*

If it were intended to abolish a command, given so plainly, and with circumstances of such amazing solemnity, the abrogation would undoubtedly have been communicated in a manner equally clear with that in which the command itself was originally given. But the Scriptures contain nothing which resembles an abrogation of it, communicated either clearly or obscurely. When Christ abolished the ceremonial and civil laws of the Jews, so far as they might be thought to extend to the Gentiles; and taught the true moral system of the Old Testament; and when the apostles afterward completed the evangelical account of this subject; it is, I think, incredible that if this precept were to be abolished at all, neither he nor they should give a single hint concerning the abolition. As both have left it just where they found it, without even intimating that it was at all to be annulled; we may reasonably conclude, that its obligation has never been lessened.

In the mean time, it ought to be observed, that many other precepts, comprised in the Mosaic law, which are universally acknowledged to be of a moral nature, were nevertheless not introduced into the decalogue; were not spoken by the voice of God; nor written with his finger; nor placed on the tables of stone fashioned by himself.

Why was this supreme distinction made in favour of the precept now under discussion? This question I m ay per haps answer more particularly hereafter. It is sufficient to observe at present, that it arose solely from the superior importance of the precept itself.

2. *The perpetual establishment of the sabbath is evident from its original institution.*

Of this we have the following account in Genesis ii. 1—3. *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.* The proofs which this passage affords for the perpetuity of the sabbath, respect *the time* and *the end* of the institution.

*The time* of the institution was the seventh day after the creation was begun, and the first day after it was ended. At this time, none of the human race were in being but our first parents. For *them* the sabbath was instituted; and clearly, therefore, for *all* their posterity also. If it was not instituted for *all* their posterity, it was not instituted for *any* of them: for certainly there can be no reason given, why it was instituted for one more than another. The Jews particularly were no more nearly connected with Adam than we are; and no more interested in any thing commanded to him, than are the Gentiles. Accordingly, it is, so far as I know, universally conceded, that if the sabbath was instituted at this time, it is obligatory on all men to the end of the world.

The resting of God on this day, alleged in the text as a primary and authoritative reason why the sabbath should be kept holy, is a reason extending to all men alike. In my own view it is incredible, that God should rest on this day, to furnish an example, to the Jewish nation merely, of observing the sabbath; or that so solemn a transaction as this, in its own nature affecting the whole human race alike, should be intentionally confined in its influence to a ten thousandth part of mankind. The example of God, so far as it is imitable, is in its very nature authoritative, and obligatory on every intelligent creature; and in the present case, plainly on the whole human race. For man to limit

it, where God himself has not been pleased to limit it, is evidently unwarrantable and indefensible.

*The end* of the institution plainly holds out the same universality of obligation. I have already observed, that this is twofold; *viz.* to commemorate the glory of God displayed in the creation; and to attain and increase holiness in the soul of man. I have also observed, that all men are alike interested in both these objects. Nor can there be a single pretence, that any nation, or any person, is more interested in either, than any other person or nation. Every individual stands in exactly the same relations to God; is under exactly the same obligations; and is bound, in this case, to duties exactly the same.

3. *The perpetuity of the sabbath is clearly taught in Isaiah* lvi. 6—8.

*Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants; every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be acceptable on my altar: for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. The Lord God, who gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.*

From this passage it is evident, that, when the house of God shall become a house of prayer for all people, and when the outcasts of Israel, and others beside them, shall be gathered unto him, that is, Christ; then the sabbath shall continue a divine institution; that it shall be a duty to keep it from polluting it; and that those who keep it, particularly the sons of the stranger, or the Gentile nations; shall be accepted, and blessed in thus keeping it, and shall be made joyful in God's house of prayer.

But the house of God was never in any sense called a *house of prayer for all people,* until after the dispensation of the gospel began: *viz.* until the house of God was found wherever *two or three met together in the name of Christ;* until the period, when mankind were to *worship God, neither in Jerusalem, nor in the mountain of Samaria, but wherever they worshipped in spirit and in truth.* Under

this dispensation, therefore, the sabbath was still to continue a divine institution; was to be kept free from pollution; and the keeping of it was to be blessed, according to the declarations of the unerring spirit of prophecy.

This prediction is a part of the unchangeable counsels of JEHOVAH. It could not have been written, unless it had been true. It could not have been true, unless fulfilled by this very observation of the sabbath. The sabbath could not have been thus observed, and men could not have been thus blessed in observing it, unless at the very time of this observance it had still remained an institution of God. For God himself has declared, that mankind *shall not add to his words, nor diminish aught from them;* and that, instead of blessing those who add to the words written in the Scriptures, he will *add to them the plagues which are written in the Scriptures.* But to add to the *institutions of* God is to add to his *word,* in the most arrogant and guilty manner. If the sabbath be not now a divine institution; he who observes it as such adds to the institutions of God, and is grossly guilty of this arrogance. He may therefore certainly, as well as justly, expect to find a curse, and not a blessing: to be destroyed with a more terrible destruction than that which Nadab and Abihu experienced, for adding to the institutions of God one of their own, of a far less extraordinary and guilty nature.

But how different from all this has been the fact! How exactly, as well as gloriously, has this prediction been fulfilled! God has really *gathered unto Christ others beside the outcasts of Israel.* The Gentiles, *the sons of the stranger, have,* in immense multitudes, *joined themselves to the Lord. They have served him. They have loved his name. They have kept the sabbath from polluting it. They have taken hold of his covenant. They have been made joyful in his house of prayer: and their sacrifices, and their burnt-offerings have been accepted upon his altar: and his house has been called a house of prayer for all people.* Thus, as Isaiah predicted, there has actually been a sabbath under the dispensation of the gospel, remaining now for almost eighteen hundred years; and this sabbath has been attended with the peculiar blessings predicted by this evangelical prophet.

4. *The perpetuity of the sabbath is fairly argued from psalm* cxviii. 19—26.

*Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them; and I will praise the Lord. This gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused, is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made. We will rejoice, and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity! Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord. We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.*

This psalm, particularly the prophecy contained in these words, is explained by St. Peter, *as referring to Christ; the true head-stone of the corner rejected by the Jewish builders:* and of course as referring to the times of the Christian dispensation. In these times, then, there was to be *a day which the Lord hath made;* not in the literal sense; for in this sense he had made all days; but in the spiritual sense; that is, a day which he had sanctified; consecrated to himself; devoted to his own worship; of a common and secular day, made into a holy and religious one. It was a day, on which *the gates of righteousness* were to be *opened: that is,* the gates of the sanctuary, or house of God; and styled *the gate,* or gates *of the Lord.* It was a day, on which *the righteous* as a body were *to enter into them.* It was the day, on which *the Lord became their salvation.* It was the day, on which *the stone rejected by the builders, became the head-stone of the corner.* It was a day on which *prayers were to be offered up and praises to be sung to God.* Finally, it was a day, in which *the righteous were to receive blessings from the house of the Lord.*

All my audience must have anticipated the conclusion, as flowing irresistibly even from this slight examination of the passage; that *this was a day devoted to religious employments,* and particularly *to the public worship of God.* It is equally evident, that it is *the day on which Christ arose from the dead,* or, in other words, *became the head-stone of the corner.* It is therefore *the sabbath;* the only day ever devoted to purposes of this nature by the authority of inspiration. It is *a sabbath* also *existing under the*

*gospel,* or *after the resurrection of Christ.* Of course, it is to continue to the end of the world; for all the institutions which exist under the gospel, are perpetual.

5. *The perpetual establishment of the sabbath is evident from Revelation* i. 10, *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.*

The book of Revelation was probably written about the year 96, and of course many years after the resurrection of Christ. At this time, there *was a day generally known to Christians by the name of the Lord's day.* It was also entitled the Lord's day by the pen of St. John, under the immediate influence of inspiration. It was therefore so called with the approbation of the Spirit of the truth. But this could not have been, unless it had been originally instituted by God himself. That the apostle, in this manner of mentioning it, accords intentionally with this denomination, as being the proper one, will, I presume, not be disputed; because the contrary supposition would make him lend his own sanction to a false, as well as an unauthorized, denomination of this day, and to *the false doctrine involved in it;* viz. that *there was a day consecrated with propriety to the Lord,* or, in other words, *consecrated by divine appointment:* since no other consecration of it would have any propriety. If this doctrine were false, as according to the supposition it must be, it could not fail to prove in a high degree dangerous; as it would naturally lead all who read this book, to hold a religious institution as established by God which he had not in fact appointed; and thus, by *worshipping him according to the commandments of men, to worship him in vain.* The guilt and the mischiefs of this doctrine, thus received and obeyed, would be incomprehensible. The Spirit of truth, who directed the pen of St. John, cannot have sanctioned this doctrine, unless it were true; nor have given this denomination to the day spoken of, unless it were given by the will of God.

There was, therefore, at the period specified, and under the gospel, a day holden by the apostle, by Christians generally, and by God himself, as the Lord's day; or a day peculiarly consecrated to Christ, the Lord mentioned by St. John in this passage. There is now, there has always been, but one such day; and but one manner, in which a day can be the Lord's. This day is the sabbath; a holy,

heavenly rest from every sinful and every secular concern. It is his, by being authoritatively appropriated to his use by himself; and by his requiring mankind, whenever it returns, to consecrate their time, their talents, and themselves, to his immediate service and religious worship. As then there was such a day, a day consecrated to the Lord, a sabbath at the time when the Revelation of St. John was written; so this day is perpetually established. For, every institution under the gospel, the last dispensation of God to mankind, will remain in full force to the end of the world.

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# SERMON CVI.

## THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

### THE PERPETUITY AND CHANGE OF THE SABBATH.

*Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.*—EXOD. XX. 8. 11.

IN the preceding discourse, from these words, I proposed to consider,

I. *The perpetual establishment of the sabbath;* and,

II. *The manner in which it is to be observed.*

The first of these propositions I examined, at some length, in that discourse: and shall now go on *to offer some additional observations concerning the same subject.* If I have proved, as I flatter myself I have, that *the sabbath*

*an institution, designed to last to the end of the world;* it will naturally occur to my audience, as a question of prime importance in the consideration of this subject, "Why is it, that you and other Christians, instead of observing the sabbath originally instituted, keep another day as the sabbath; a day of which no mention was made in the institution, and for the religious observation of which we find no express command either in the Old or New Testament?"

This question is certainly asked with unobjectionable propriety; and certainly demands a candid and satisfactory answer. Such an answer I will now endeavour to give.

It is unquestionably true, that the institution, whatever it is, is to be taken as we find it in the Scriptures; and that men are in no respect to change it. He who made it, is the only being in the universe who has the right to abrogate or to alter that which he has made. As we find it then in the Scriptures, we are bound to take it; whether agreeable to our own ideas of wisdom and propriety, or not.

In order to explain my own views of this subject, it will be useful to observe, that *this institution obviously consists of two parts; the sabbath, or holy rest, and the day on which it is holden.* These are plainly alluded to, as distinct from each other, in the text; where it is said, *The Lord rested on the seventh day, and blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.* This language is chosen of design; and, as I apprehend, with a propriety intentionally instructive to *us.* God did not bless *the seventh day, nor hallow it as the seventh day; but only as being the day on which the sabbath, or the holy rest, was to be kept.* Were the sabbath then warrantably to be kept, at different periods, on each of the days of the week; the blessing would follow it, on whatever day it was holden.

It was plain, then, that *the sabbath,* being a thing entirely distinct from *the day on which it is kept,* may be a perpetual institution; and yet be kept, if God should so order it, on any, or successively on all, the days of the week. If, then, the day on which the sabbath was to be holden, should by divine appointment be a different one from that which was originally established; the sabbath itself, the substance of the institution, might still remain the same. All that would be changed, would plainly be a given day of the

week; a thing perfectly circumstantial; and of no other importance than that which circumstances gave it.

*The day,* I say, might be altered without altering at all *the substance of the institution.* Still it could be altered only by divine appointment. The same authority which instituted the sabbath, appointed also the day on which it was to be holden: and no other authority is competent to change either in any degree. If, then, we cannot find in the Scriptures plain and ample proofs of an abrogation of the original day; or the substitution of a new one; the day undoubtedly remains in full force and obligation, and is now religiously to be celebrated by all the race of Adam. It shall be the business of this discourse to collect to a point the light which the Scriptures afford us concerning this important subject.

I. *The nature of the subject furnishes room to suppose, that the day on which the sabbath was to be celebrated under the Christian dispensation, might be a different one from that which was originally appointed.*

The end of the institution mentioned in the text, is the commemoration of the glory of God in the creation of the world. The reason why God chose that the manifestation of himself in that wonderful work should be commemorated rather than that which was made in the deluge, or the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, was, it is presumed, *the peculiar greatness of the work itself, and of the display which it furnished of his perfections.* If this be admitted, as it probably will be by every sober man; it must also be admitted, that we ought, according to this scheme, to expect any other work of God, of still greater importance, and more glorious to the divine character, than the creation itself, to be commemorated with equal or greater solemnity. But *the work of redemption,* or, as it is sometimes styled in the Scriptures, *the new creation,* is a more glorious work than that of creating the heavens and the earth. This doctrine may be elucidated by the following considerations.

In the first place, *The agent in both these works is the same.* St. Paul expressly declares, that *Christ in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth; that the heavens are the work of his hands;* Heb. i. 10; *and that all things*

*visible and invisible, were created by him, and for him.* Col. i. 16. St. John also teaches us, that *all things were made by him; and that without him there was not one thing made which has existed.* John i. 3. *The same person, therefore, is honoured* in a commemoration of both these wonderful works.

Secondly; *The end of a work,* that is, *the reason for which it is done, is of more importance than the work itself.* This truth will be admitted on all hands. No intelligent being, who claims the character of wisdom, ever undertakes a work without an end sufficiently important to justify the means adopted for its accomplishment. Much less will this be supposed of God. But *the end of creation is Providence;* and of all the works of Providence, *the work of redemption,* or *the new creation, is incalculably the most important;* the hinge on which all the rest turn; the work, towards the completion of which all the rest are directed: in a word, the end of them all. Accordingly, St. Paul says, *Who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent, that now unto principalities and powers, in heavenly places, might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God. The display of the wisdom of God by the church in the work of redemption was, therefore, the intent,* or *end for which all things were created by Jesus Christ.* Without the work of redemption, then, the purpose of God in creating all things, and the real use of the thing themselves, would have been prevented.

Thirdly; *The superior importance of the new creation, is evident in this fact; that the old creation, by its unceasing changes, continually decays and degenerates, while the new creation becomes, by its own changes, unceasingly brighter and better.*

Fourthly; *The old creation is a transitory work, made for consumption by fire: whereas the new is intended for eternal duration.*

Thus from the nature of the case there is ample room to suppose, that the work of redemption might, by divine appointment, be commemorated preferably to the work of creation.

2. *It is expressly foretold by the prophet Isaiah, that the*

*work of redemption shall be commemorated in preference to the work of creation.* Isa. lxv. 17, 18.

*For behold,* saith God, *I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, neither shall it come into mind. But be ye glad, and rejoice for ever, in that which I create: for behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and my people a joy.* In this passage of Scripture we are informed, that God designed to create what in the first of these verses is called *new heavens and a new earth.* This, in the second verse, is explained in *simple* language; and is said to be *creating the people of God a joy and a rejoicing.* In other words, it is *no other than redeeming and sanctifying the souls of men;* by means of which *they become a rejoicing to God, and to each other.*

In this declaration of the prophet there are two things particularly claiming our attention. The first is, that the new creation, or the work of redemption, is of far greater importance in the eye of God, than the former creation. The second is an express prediction, that the former creation shall not be remembered by the church, nor come into mind; or, in other words, shall not be commemorated. This I understand, as almost all similar Jewish phrases are to be understood, in a comparative sense; and suppose the prophet to intend, *that it shall be far less remembered* and commemorated; as being of far less importance.

That this passage refers to the times of the evangelical dispensation is certain from the prediction itself: since the new creation is the very subject of it, and the commencement of that dispensation. It is equally evident also from the whole strain of the chapter.

This passage appears to me to place the fact in the clearest light, that a particular, superior, and extraordinary commemoration of the work of redemption by the Christian church, in all its various ages, was a part of the good pleasure of God; and was designed by him to be accomplished in the course of his providence. But there neither is, nor ever was, any public, solemn commemoration of this work, by the Christian church, except that which is holden on the first day of the week; or the day in which Christ completed this great work by his resurrection from the dead. This

prophecy has therefore been unfulfilled, so far as I see, unless it has been fulfilled in this very manner. But if it has been fulfilled in this manner; then this manner of fulfilling it has been agreeable to the true intention of the prophecy, and to the good pleasure of God expressed in it; and is therefore that very part of the system of his providence, which is here unfolded to mankind.

At the same time it is to be remembered, that the former institution is still substantially preserved. The sabbath still returns upon one day in seven. The great facts, that *in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day,* are still presented to the mind in their full force. The work of creating the heavens and the earth is therefore regularly commemorated, according to the original institution of God: while the new creation, as its importance demands, and as this prophecy directly foretells, takes its own superior place in the commemoration. Thus the institution, instead of being abrogated in every respect, is only changed in such a manner, as to enlarge its usefulness and importance to mankind, and to become a solemn memorial of two wonderful works of God, instead of one. *The sabbath itself* is unchanged. It still returns at the end of seven days. It is still a memorial of the creation. But the institution is enlarged in such a manner, as to commemorate also the work of redemption.

With this prophecy facts have corresponded in a wonderful manner. All Christians commemorate the work of creation in their prayers and praises, their religious meditations and discourses, from sabbath to sabbath. But every Christian perfectly well knows, that the work of redemption holds a far higher place in every private and in every public religious service; and that, according to the declaration of God in this passage, *the former is* comparatively *not remembered, neither does it come into mind.* At the same time, the work of redemption is not merely the chief, but the only, means of originating holiness in the soul, and altogether the principal means of advancing it towards perfection. In every respect, therefore, the Christian sabbath is now better suited to the great ends of the institution, than the original day. Until the time of Christ's resurrection, the seventh day commemorated the most glorious work which

God had ever accomplished, and the most wonderful display of the divine perfections. But by the resurrection of Christ, a new, and far more glorious, work was finished. While the sabbath therefore was by divine appointment kept on the seventh day, it was exactly suited to the purpose of commemorating the most glorious work of God which had ever taken place. But after the resurrection of Christ, the first day of the week was plainly better fitted, than any other day, to become a religious memorial of both these wonderful works, by being the day on which Christ arose from the dead, and by returning regularly at the end of every six days. Whatever other opinions we adopt concerning this subject, it must, I think, be readily acknowledged, that no other day could possibly combine all these advantages.

This important consideration seems to be plainly intimated in the text. *Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy. The seventh day is the sabbath. In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.* It cannot escape the notice of every reader of this passage, that the duty of remembering the sabbath, to keep it holy, enjoined at the beginning, and the blessing and consecration mentioned at the end, are applied to the sabbath, and not to the day; and that the seventh day is declared to be the *sabbath-day*, or the day on which the sabbath is to be holden. The meaning of this is obviously, that the seventh day is, or was at that time, the existing day of the sabbath; without determining how long it should continue to possess this character. God established it indefinitely; and, unless he should be pleased to change it, perpetually, as the day of the sabbath. But on whatever day he should think fit to establish the sabbath, it was to be remembered and kept holy. The blessing also and the sanctification were annexed to the sabbath-day, and not to the seventh. In this manner the Christian church became informed of their duty, whenever the day should be changed; and, if they performed it faithfully, were assured of this peculiar blessing. Thus also they were preserved from the fears, which might otherwise arise, of losing the blessing annexed to the sabbath, whenever the day on which it

should be holden should be changed. Had the blessing in this command been annexed to the seventh day, it would probably have occasioned an immoveable perplexity to the Christian church, had they found the present account of the sabbath contained in the New Testament.

3. *The hundred and eighteenth Psalm is a direct prediction, that the day of Christ's resurrection was to be the day on which the sabbath should be holden under the gospel.*

In the 14th verse of this psalm the divine writer declares, that *the Lord is his strength and his song; and is become his salvation.* This fact we know was accomplished when Christ rose from the dead. In consequence of this great event, he hears *the voice of rejoicing and of salvation in the tabernacle of the righteous;* or in the house of God. In the 19th verse he says, *Open to me the gates of righteousness. I will praise thee; for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.* This event he again describes in a new and under a very different image: *The stone which the builders refused, is become the head-stone of the corner.* He then subjoins, *This is the day which the Lord hath made:* that is, the day which Christ consecrated, or made into a holy day, when he became *the head-stone of the corner:* that is, when he arose from the dead. He then adds, *We will rejoice and be glad in it:* that is, we, the righteous; the church of God; for in *their* name he speaks throughout all the latter part of this psalm, whether speaking in the singular or plural. In their name he says, in the following verse, *Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord! O Lord! I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* The words of the two last-mentioned verses are applied directly to Christ, by the multitudes who accompanied him in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. *The multitudes,* saith St. Matthew, *cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!* The words of the last verse are also applied by Christ to himself, Matt. xxiv. 39, *For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* The comment of the multitudes is reasonably supposed to be that of the Jewish church in general. That of Christ, and that of St. Peter, mentioned in the preceding discourse,

are the decisive law of interpretation to the Christian church. We are therefore warranted to conclude, that the Psalmist here declares, not only the joy and gladness of the Christian church *in the resurrection of Christ*, but *in the day on which he arose:* for he says, *This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.* This day he also declares to be a day of public worship; a day on which *the gates of righteousness were to be opened*, and *the righteous*, or the church as a body, *were to enter* them, and on which the ministers of the gospel were to *bless them* (in the Jewish language, or language of the temple service), *out of the house of the Lord;* or, in language adapted to the Christian manner of worship, *in* the house of the Lord. The substance in this comment is beautifully given by Dr. Watts, in the two following stanzas.

The work, O Lord, is thine,
And wondrous in our eyes;
This day declares it all divine,
This day did Jesus rise.

This is the glorious day
That our Redeemer made:
Let us rejoice, and sing, and pray;
Let all the church be glad.

4. *Christ has indicated, that the seventh day should cease to be the sabbath after his resurrection.*

In Matthew ix. 14, we are informed, that the disciples of John came to him, and inquired of him why his disciples did not fast, as well as themselves and the Pharisees. Christ replied, *Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.* Christ was crucified and buried on Friday. At the close then of this day he was taken from the children of the bride-chamber; that is, from his disciples. Throughout *Saturday* he lay in the grave. On *the first day of the week, the Christian sabbath,* he was restored to them again. This then became to them the proper season of fasting, according to his own declaration. But the sabbath was *a festival,* from the beginning. Such it continues to be unto the end. That it was to be such to

the Christian church, is amply proved by the passage formerly quoted from Isaiah lvi. 6, 7, and from the express declarations, just now quoted from the 118th psalm. Fasting on this day can therefore never accord with its original and universal design. But on the seventh day, the day during which he lay in the grave, as he informs us, it was proper that they should fast. In this declaration it is indicated, not obscurely, that the seventh day would soon cease to be a season fitted for the observance of the sabbath.

It must be obvious to the least reflection, that this season of Christ's extreme humiliation is the most improper period conceivable *for commemorating, with joy and gladness, the wonderful work of redemption.* Every thing, in this season, must appear to a Christian to demand humiliation and mourning, rather than exultation. During this period the enemies of Christ prevailed against him; and *the serpent,* according to the first prophecy ever given concerning him to this world, *bruised his heel.* To rejoice on this day would be to lay hold on the time of our Saviour's greatest sufferings, and deepest humiliation, as the proper season for our greatest exultation. This certainly was not the conduct of the apostles. They mourned in the most melancholy and distressing manner. Nor do they appear ever to have regarded the seventh day afterward as the holy, joyful rest of God. On the contrary, they transferred this festival to another day.

5. *The apostles, by their example, have decisively taught us, that the day of Christ's resurrection was to be the Christian sabbath.*

On the first day of the week, the day of his resurrection, Christ met his disciples assembled together. On the first day of the week following, he met them again assembled together. On the first day of the week, at the feast called *Pentecost,* the Spirit descended in a miraculous and glorious manner upon the apostles. On the first day of the week the disciples assembled together customarily, *to break bread,* and to make charitable contributions for their suffering brethren. From the three first of these facts it is plain, that Christ thought fit to honour this day with peculiar tokens of his approbation. From the last, that the apostles thought themselves warranted to devote it to religious purposes.

I have already shewn, above and sufficiently, that God has absolutely prohibited all men, under severe denunciations, and with terrible expressions of his anger, either *to form religious institutions, or to substitute their own institutions for his.* It is clearly impossible, that the apostles, who have taught us this very doctrine, should, under the influence of inspiration, disobey him in this interesting particular by forming so remarkable a religious institution; abolishing that of God; and substituting their own in its place. Nothing is more evident to me, than that this example has all the weight which can be attached to any precept whatever. This will especially appear, if we remember, that Peter with the eleven apostles celebrated the first day of the week, and that Paul and his followers did the same. Paul received his gospel immediately from Christ; and informs us in Galatians i. 2, that the apostles at Jerusalem *added nothing to him.* For three years he never saw one of them; and had not the remotest correspondence with them. All the doctrines therefore which Paul acknowledged, he received directly from Christ; and was indebted for none of them to his companions in the apostleship. Yet Peter and his followers observed the first day of the week as the religious day, and Paul and his followers observed the same. This is evident from his direction to the churches at Galatia and Corinth, to *lay by them somewhat on the first day of the week* for the poor saints at Jerusalem. The reason why the first day of the week is pitched upon for this purpose, is obviously this; that they assembled customarily on the first day of the week for religious purposes. Accordingly, in Acts xx. 7, we are informed, that *the disciples in Troas came together on the first day of the week, to break bread;* and that *Paul preached unto them, continuing his speech until midnight.* But whence did these persons, thus separated, derive this agreement in their observance of the first day of the week? The only answer which can be given to this question is, *from the inspiration which guided them both.* Had they been uninspired: their agreement in a case of this nature, where they acted independently of each other, would have proved, that they derived the doctrine, and the practice grounded on it, from a common source. Their character, as inspired men and apostles, proves beyond de-

bate, that the common source, from which they thus harmoniously derived a religious institution, was God.

6. *The same doctrine is proved from the already cited passage,* Rev. i. 10; *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.*

From this declaration it is evident, that in or about the year 96, when the Apocalypse was written and published, there was a day known and observed by Christians generally as the Lord's day. This appellation was, I presume, derived from the passage before quoted from the 118th Psalm; in which it is said concerning the day of Christ's resurrection, *This is the day which the Lord hath made:* that is, hath made of a common into a holy day; or in other words, consecrated to himself. But the day pointed out in this passage, is the day on which Christ rose from the dead.

That this was in fact the day styled by St. John *the Lord's day,* is unanswerably evident from the history of the church; and it is equally evident, that the sabbath, or holy rest, together with all the religious services pertaining to it, were celebrated by the church on this day. Every one, who has read with attention the New Testament, must have observed, that there is no hint, as well as no precept, directing Christians to celebrate the seventh day as holy time. The ancient Christians, particularly the Jewish Christians, when they had occasion to preach to the Jews, or to assemble with them, entered into their synagogues on the seventh day, and undoubtedly worshipped with them in their manner; but there is not the least reason to believe, either from the Acts or from the Epistles, that they ever assembled of their own accord, on that day, for religious services, in a regular or customary manner.

Ignatius, a companion of the apostles, says, in so many words, "Let us no more sabbatize;" that is, keep the Jewish sabbath, "but let us keep the Lord's day, on which our *Life* arose."

Justin Martyr, who lived at the close of the first and the beginning of the second century, says, "On the day called Sunday is an assembly of all who live in the city or country; and the memoirs of the apostles, and the writings of the prophets," that is, the Old and New Testament, "are read." For this he assigns the reasons of the Chris-

tians; *viz.* "that it was the day on which the creation of the world began, and on which Christ arose from the dead."

Irenæus, a disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of St. John himself, who lived in the second century, says, "On the Lord's day every one of us, Christians, keeps the sabbath; meditating in the law," or Scriptures, "and rejoicing in the works of God."

Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, who lived in the time of Irenæus, that is, in the second century, says, in his letter to the church at Rome, "To-day we celebrate the Lord's day, when we read your epistle to us."

Tertullian, who also lived in the second century, speaks of the Lord's day as a Christian solemnity.

Petavius declares, that, "but one Lord's day was observed in the earliest times of the church."

It is indeed true, that in that miserable forgery, which professes itself to have been written by the apostles, and is styled *the apostolical constitutions;* but which was plainly the work of some impostor, living in the latter end of the fourth, or the beginning of the fifth century, certainly not earlier, it is directed, that Christians should keep both the Jewish sabbath and the Lord's day, as religious festivals; and that every sabbath but one in the year, and every Lord's day, should be observed in this manner. It is also true, that in the fifth century, both these days were kept in this manner by Christians generally, except the churches of Rome and Alexandria; who did *not* observe the Jewish sabbath as a religious day. This appears by the testimony of both Socrates and Sozomen. Concerning this subject Petavius declares, that "the most holy fathers agreed, that the apostles never ordained any thing of this nature." He also remarks, that the council of Laodicea, which probably sat about the year 363, forbade, in their twenty-ninth canon, that Christians should rest from labour on the sabbath or seventh day. For they say, "Christians ought not to Judaize, nor to rest on the sabbath, that is, *the seventh* day; but preferring the Lord's day to rest, if indeed it should be in their power, as Christians."*

From these observations it is plain, that although in the

* Lardner.

fifth century many Christians had reverted to the observation of the Jewish sabbath, while yet they universally celebrated the Lord's day; yet the practice, even in this period of miserable declension, was by no means universal. The churches of Rome and Alexandria never adopted it at all; and others plainly adopted it, as they did a great multitude of other corruptions at the same time, merely from their own construction of the Scriptures. We cannot wonder that those, especially when we find among them celebrated ministers of religion, *who admitted the protection and invocation of saints and martyrs,* should admit any other corruption; and that they should construe those passages of Scripture which speak of the sabbath as erroneously as they construed others.

7. *The same truth appears in this great fact; that God has perpetually and gloriously annexed his blessing to the Christian sabbath.*

If this day be not divinely instituted; then God has suffered his church to disuse and annihilate his own institution, and substitute one of mere human device in its stead. Will this be believed? But this is not all: he has annexed the blessing which he originally united to the sabbath, instituted by himself, to that which was the means of destroying it, and which was established by human authority merely. After requiring that men should add nothing to his words, and forbidding them to diminish aught from them; after threatening the plagues denounced in the Scriptures to him who should add unto the words which they contain; and declaring, that he would *take away out of the book of life the part of him* who *should take away from the words written in the Scriptures:* can any man believe, that he would forsake, that he has forsaken, his own institution; an institution of this magnitude; an institution on which have depended, in all lands and ages, the observation, influence, and existence, of his holy law? Can any man believe, that he, who so dreadfully punished Nadab and Abihu for forsaking his own institution, in a case of far inferior magnitude, and setting up one of their own in its stead, would not only *not punish, but abundantly and unceasingly bless,* the Christian church, while perpetrating and persisting in iniquity of exactly the same nature, and

far greater in degree? The Christian who can believe this, must be prepared to believe any thing.

Had men *known nothing concerning the institution of God;* the charity of their fellow-men might be naturally enough extended to them, while employed in religiously commemorating Christ's resurrection. The appearance of piety in such a commemoration, and their freedom from the impiety of intruding upon a divine institution, might induce others to think favourably of their conduct. But in the case in hand, the institution was begun by the apostles; men inspired; chosen followers of Christ; and the erectors of his kingdom in the world. If they sinned they sinned wilfully, and in defiance of their inspiration. With *them* however the blessing began to be annexed to this day in a most wonderful and glorious manner. From *them* it has been uninterruptedly continued to the present time. To this day, under God, as a primary mean, mankind are indebted for all the religion which has been in the world from the days of the apostles. If then the Christian sabbath is not a divine institution, God has made a device of man a more powerful support to his spiritual kingdom, a more efficacious instrument of diffusing truth and righteousness, than most, perhaps than all others; while at the same time he has, so far as I am able to discern, wholly neglected and forgotten a most solemn institution of his own. Thus a human device has been a peculiar, if not a singular means of accomplishing the greatest glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and men, it would seem, will, in the end, *have whereof to glory before God.*

This blessing has been too evident, too uniform, and too long continued, to admit of a doubt; too great and too wonderful, to be passed over in silence. On this day the perfections of God, manifested in the amazing works of creation and redemption, have, more than on all others, been solemnly, gratefully, and joyfully, remembered and celebrated. On this day millions of the human race have been born unto God. On this day, Christians have ever found their prime blessings. From the word and ordinances of God, from the influences of the Holy Spirit, from the presence of Christ in his church, Christians have derived, on this day more than on all others, the most delightful

views of the divine character, clear apprehensions of their own duty, lively devotion to the service of God, strength to overcome temptations, and glorious anticipations of immortality. Take this day from the calendar of the Christian, and all that remains will be cloudy and cheerless. Religion will instantly decay. Ignorance, error, and vice, will immediately triumph; the sense of duty vanish; morals fade way; the acknowledgment, and even the remembrance, of God be far removed from mankind; the glad tidings of salvation cease to sound, and the communication between earth and heaven be cut off for ever.

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# SERMON CVII.

## FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

### OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

*There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.*
HEB. IV. 9.

IN the two preceding discourses I have, according to the scheme originally proposed, endeavoured to prove *the perpetual establishment of the sabbath, as a divine institution;* and to shew, that *the day on which it is by divine appointment to be holden by the Christian church, is the day of Christ's resurrection.*

In the following discourse, I shall proceed *to consider the objections which have been made to this doctrine.* As all the important objections within my knowledge are adduced by the late archdeacon Paley, it is my design to reply to this respectable writer in form: such a reply being, in my own apprehension, all that is necessary with respect to the subject at large.

The text I consider as a direct assertion, that *there is a sabbath in the Christian church, explained by the verse following to be founded on the fact, that Christ rested from his labours in the work of redemption; as the seventh day sab-*

*bath was founded on the fact, that God rested on that day from his labours in the work of creation. For he that hath entered into his rest, even he hath rested from his works, as God did from his* own. The word translated *rest,* in the text, is σαββατισμος. Ainsworth, a man eminently qualified to judge of this subject, translates Exod. xvi. 23, thus: *This is that which* JEHOVAH *hath spoken: To-morrow is the sabbatism, the sabbath of holiness to* JEHOVAH. In the same manner he translates Exod. xxxi. 15; Lev. xxiii. 3; and xxv. 4. In commenting on Exod. xvi. 23, he says, "*Sabbatism, rest:* that is, rest, or cessation. But as the Hebrew *shabbath* is retained by the Holy Ghost in the Greek σαββατον, so the Hebrew *shabbathon,* here used, is by the apostle σαββατισμος, in Heb. iv. 9." The verse ought therefore to be rendered, *There remaineth therefore a sabbatism,* or holy sabbath, *to the people of God:* and this day the following verse proves to be the day on which Christ rose from the dead.

The reason why I have not adduced this passage of Scripture, together with those immediately connected with it, in proof of the doctrine under debate, is, that a comment on a paragraph so obscurely written, and demanding so particular an explanation, must be very long; and would probably be very tedious to many of my audience.

1. The first and great objection of Dr. Paley to the perpetuity of the sabbath is, that the account of its original institution is found in the following passage, Exod. xvi. 22—30. *And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man; and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you, to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade. And Moses said, Eat that to-day, for to-day is a sabbath unto the Lord: to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my statutes and my laws?*

*See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days: abide ye every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.*

The argument here is wholly derived from this phraseology: *To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord. To-day is a sabbath unto the Lord:* and, *The Lord hath given you the sabbath.* In these expressions Dr. Paley thinks he finds the first institution of the sabbath. In my view, however, after examining long and often the arguments of this respectable writer, they appear to lead to the contrary conclusion. It is to be observed, that the whole argument depends on *the first* of these passages; because, *that* being once introduced, the rest would, in the case supposed, follow it of course; and because they refer directly to it, and are grounded upon it.

As a preface to the answer which I intend to make to this argument, I remark, that the words of Moses are addressed to *the elders of Israel,* who had complained to him of the improper conduct of their countrymen, for gathering twice as much bread on the sixth day, as they customarily gathered on other days. As Moses had forbidden them to leave of it till morning, and undoubtedly by divine inspiration, the elders supposed their countrymen to have trespassed, in collecting this double quantity upon the sixth day. Upon this part of the story I observe,

1. *That the division of time into weeks was perfectly known to the Israelites.* This is proved by the phrases, *the sixth day,* and *the seventh day;* obviously referring to the days of *the week,* and not to the days of *the month.* Now I ask, whence had these people this scheme in dividing time, unless from the history of the creation, traditionarily conveyed down to them? This tradition, it will be observed, could come to them from Adam, *through six persons;* Methuselah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, and Amram.

2. *Although in the fifth verse God informed Moses, that the congregation should gather twice as much on the sixth day; it seems highly probable, if not absolutely certain, that Moses did not inform* THEM: *for we find, that the elders, who would, I think, certainly have received this information first, were plainly ignorant of it.* The people, therefore,

seem to have supposed the ensuing day to be the sabbath, of their own accord; and for this reason to have ventured to gather a double quantity of manna, from an apprehension that the labour would be improper and unlawful on that day. Some of them, indeed, went out from a spirit of rebellion and unbelief, and probably under the influence of an idle curiosity, to learn whether the manna would descend on that day, contrary to the prediction of Moses, or not. But this fact affects not the argument in hand.

Let me now ask, *whether the first of these declarations of Moses, This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord,* is *the language of a man speaking of a thing altogether new and unheard of;* of a thing totally different from all other things hitherto known in the world; or *the language of a man referring to something already known,* and speaking to persons, who, although acquainted with the institution itself, had an imperfect knowledge of the proper day on which it was to be holden; and were therefore uncertain with respect to this point? Were two of us to appoint a future day of the month (say the second of December) for the transaction of certain business; a third, who was present, would naturally observe, if such were the fact, that the second of December will be the sabbath. Or were we conversing upon the same subject, *on the first of December,* the same person would naturally say, "To-morrow is the sabbath." These, you will observe, are the very words of Moses. Here we are unmindful, and through forgetfulness ignorant, that the sabbath is to take place on that day. Yet we are perfectly acquainted with the institution generally: and that we are acquainted with it, this phraseology is direct proof: because it springs from these very circumstances; and would, in the case stated, be used by all men.

But if the institution were wholly unknown, would not the reply be made in terms equivalent to the following? "We cannot meet on the morrow, or the second of December, for this business: because the legislature has by law forbidden all the inhabitants to do business on that day; and has required them to assemble for the worship of God, and to abstain from every secular pursuit." To this answer would naturally succeed inquiries concerning the fact; the

time and the end of passing the law; the motives which led to it: the terms in which it was couched; its requisitions, and its penalties. No instance, it is presumed, can be found, in which the conversation concerning a new subject of this nature would be such as is here recorded by Moses; or in which it would not be substantially such as I have recited. On the contrary, the conversation, in the case which I have supposed to be that of the Israelites, is always exactly that of Moses.

In this opinion I am established by the remarkable fact, that the Israelites make no inquiry concerning this supposed novel institution: although so eminently important, and so plain an object of rational curiosity. The elders themselves, notwithstanding their zeal against the supposed transgression of the people, ask no questions, and make no reply. If the institution were new, and now first made known to them, this conduct is unaccountable. But if they were acquainted with the institution, and doubtful concerning the day, it was perfectly natural.

The reckoning of time, at this as well as many preceding and succeeding periods, it is well known, was extremely lame and confused. The Israelites, with respect to this subject, laboured under peculiar disadvantages. They had been long in a state of servitude; and were of course ignorant, distressed, and naturally inattentive to this and other subjects of a similar nature. A reckoning would, indeed, be kept among them, however ignorant. But it must almost necessarily be imperfect, doubtful, and disputed. Different opinions concerning time would of course prevail.

Should it be said, that the causes which I have specified would make them forget the institution itself; I answer, that other nations, as will be seen hereafter, did not forget it; but consecrated the seventh day to religious worship; although many, perhaps all, became ignorant of the day itself. We ourselves often forget the day of the month, and week; while yet we are possessed of the most exact reckoning of time, and a perfect calendar; and are reminded of our time by so many books, papers, and other means.

Dr. Paley lays much stress on the words contained in *the third* declaration of Moses, which I have specified: *the Lord hath given you the sabbath.* In the 23d verse, when

the elders had reported to him the supposed transgression of their countrymen, in gathering a double portion of manna on the sixth day of the week, he answers, *This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord;* that is, God declares to you, that the holy rest unto himself is to be holden on the morrow. *Bake that which ye will bake to-day; and seethe that which ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you to be kept until the morning.* The next day he renewed the same monition; and informed them farther, that there would be no manna on that day, nor on the seventh day, *at any future period.* They were, therefore, to gather it on six days of the week only; and on every sixth day to provide the necessary supply for the seventh.

Some of the people, however, went out to gather manna on that very day; but found none. Upon this, God says to Moses, *How long refuse ye to keep my commandments? See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days.* The words, *the Lord hath given you the sabbath,* are perfectly explained by the original declaration of Moses on this subject, made the preceding day. *To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord.* This is the giving of the sabbath here referred to; and this, I flatter myself, has been shewn to be something widely different from originally institutingthe sabbath.

The obvious explanation of these words here given, equally explains a passage in Ezekiel xx. 12, and another in Nehemiah ix. 14, quoted by Dr. Paley for the same purpose. The *former* of these is, *Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths;* the *latter, thou madest known unto them thy holy sabbath.* If the passage in Ezekiel refers to the *sabbath* at all, which may be doubted, it is merely a repetition of the words of Moses. If it refers to the various *fasts and feasts of the Jews,* frequently denominated sabbaths, it has no connexion with the subject. The latter of these passages accords more naturally and obviously with the account which has been here given, than with that of Dr. Paley. Neither of them, it is perfectly plain, furnishes the least additional support to his opinion.

Another argument for the same purpose is derived by this

respectable writer from the following declaration, Ex. xxxi. 16, 17. *It*, that is the sabbath, *is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever.* The same thing is also mentioned by Ezekiel in nearly the same terms. Upon this Dr. Paley observes, "Now it does not seem easy to understand how the sabbath could be a sign between God and the people of Israel, unless the observance of it was peculiar to that people, and designed to be so."

The only question of importance here is, whether the fact, that the sabbath is made a sign between God and Israel, made it cease to be a memorial of the display of the divine perfections accomplished in the creation. If not; then the sabbath still remained at that time, and remains now, such a memorial. But I presume, neither Dr. Paley himself, nor any other man, would say, that God, in making the sabbath a sign between him and Israel, intended to release them from commemorating, on that day, his perfections, thus displayed in the work of creation, and his own solemn commemoration of them, when he rested at the close of this work upon the seventh day. But if the Israelites were not released from this commemoration by the passage in question; the rest of mankind could be affected by it in no manner whatever.

The truth is, that the ordinance which made the sabbath a sign to the Israelites was subsequent to the promulgation of the decalogue; and cannot affect that law, even remotely; as I shall soon demonstrate. In the same manner the sabbath was made a memorial of the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, and a type of the promised rest in Canaan. These were all merely additional uses of the sabbath, to which it was happily applied, because they perfectly harmonized with its original design.

In Deuteronomy vi. 8, Moses, after reciting the decalogue, and the summary of it contained in the two great commands of the moral law, says to Israel, *Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand.* A sign which the Israelites, by the command of God, were to bind upon their hands, was a sign between God and them, in the same manner as was the sabbath. Now I ask whether it would be proper to say, that "it does not seem easy to understand how the decalogue, and the two great commands in which it is

summed up, could be a sign between God and the people of Israel, unless the observance of them was peculiar to that people, and designed to be so."

What was intended by making the sabbath a sign between God and Israel is declared by God himself in Ezekiel xx. 12; *I gave them my sabbaths to be a sign between me and them; that they may know, that I am* JEHOVAH, *who sanctify them.* It will not be denied, that the whole human race are equally interested with the Israelites in this knowledge. All that was peculiar to them was this; they alone, for many ages, had, and it was foreseen by God that they would have, the knowledge in question; and would be the only medium of communicating it to other nations. The sabbath, therefore, was so far peculiarly a sign to them; but is obviously in its nature, and necessarily, a sign also, in a general sense, of the same knowledge to every nation afterward acquainted with the sabbath. From this very declaration in Ezekiel, in which the object of rendering the sabbath a sign to the Israelites, is pointed out, it is clear that "the observance of it was not designed to be peculiar to that people," unless the knowledge of JEHOVAH was also to be perpetually confined to *them.*

Dr. Paley farther observes, "If the sabbath be binding upon Christians; it must be binding as to the day, the duties, and the penalty; in none of which it is received."

It will be remembered, that the sabbath, and the day on which it is kept, are separate parts of the institution; so separate, that the sabbath itself may be perpetual, and yet the day be changed successively through every part of the week. The institution of the day I have already acknowledged to be no less obligatory, than that of the sabbath itself; unless it can be fairly shewn to have been changed by the same authority. Whether this has, in fact, been shewn in the preceding discourse, must be left for those who heard it to determine.

With regard to *the duties* of the sabbath, I shall only observe, that this point will be examined in a future discourse.

As to *the penalty,* it will be remembered, that it is not contained in the decalogue; but is merely a part of the civil law and internal police of the Jewish nation. Still, it

may be useful to try this reasoning with other commands of the decalogue. In *the two first precepts*, it is acknowledged, that we, as well as the Israelites, are forbidden to worship idols, or other gods, beside JEHOVAH. Now it is well known, that the Israelites, who disobeyed these commands, were by the law of Moses to be put to death. It is presumed, that Dr. Paley would not believe this penalty to be binding upon us; and that he would still acknowledge the commands themselves to be no less obligatory upon *us*, than upon *them*. It is presumed also, that he would acknowledge *the fifth command* to be equally binding upon all men. In Deut. xxi. 18—21, and in Prov. xxx. 17, it is required, that children, disobeying this command, shall be put to death. Would Dr. Paley acknowledge this penalty to be binding upon us? Or would he deny our obligation to obey the command?

II. *It is asserted by this writer, that Genesis* ii. 1—3, *does not contain an account of the original institution of the sabbath.*

This assertion he supports by the following reasons; "that the observation of the sabbath is not mentioned in the history of the world before the call of Abraham: that it is not mentioned in the history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: which he says is in many parts sufficiently circumstantial and domestic: that in Exodus xvi. no intimation is given, that the sabbath, then appointed, was only the revival of an ancient institution, which had been neglected or forgotten: that no such neglect is imputed to the inhabitants of the old world, or to any part of the family of Noah: and that there is no record of any permission to dispense with the institution during the Egyptian bondage, or on any other public emergency."

With regard to the *last* of these reasons, I answer only, that there is no record of any neglect of the institution, either during the Egyptian bondage, or during any other public emergency. During the Babylonish captivity, we have no record of any such permission, nor of any observance of the sabbath. Yet, as Nehemiah and his companions plainly observed it after their return from that captivity, it is pre-

sumed, Dr. Paley will not deny, that it was observed by the Jewish nation during that whole period.

That no negligence of the sabbath should be charged to the antediluvians, to Noah, or to any others, in cases where the sabbath is not even mentioned, can occasion no surprise; and, it is presumed, can furnish no argument relative to this or any other question. It deserves however to be remarked, as an answer to every observation which can be made of this nature, that the first censure for any impropriety in the observation of the sabbath, uttered concerning the Israelites in the Scriptures, is found in the prophet Isaiah: about seven hundred and sixty years before Christ, and seven hundred and thirty-one years after the events recorded in Exodus xvi. The second is found in Ezekiel; written about five hundred and ninety-three years before Christ, and eight hundred and ninety-seven years after these events. Can it then be surprising, when we know, from these very passages, that the Israelites merited not a little censure for their profanations of the sabbath; and when we yet find these to be the first censures cast upon them in the Scriptures; that Noah, his family, and the antediluvians, should not be censured?

The *third* of these reasons cannot, after what has been said in the former part of this discourse, need any answer. I shall, therefore, direct the following observations to *the two remaining reasons;* perhaps with more propriety considered as *one;* viz. *the silence of the Scriptures concerning the observation of the sabbath by those who lived before the call of Abraham, and by the three first patriarchs.* Concerning this subject I observe,

In the first place, *If all these persons did in fact neglect or forget the institution, it would not alter the case at all. The institution of booths* is declared, in Nehemiah viii. 17, to have been neglected and forgotten, from the time of Joshua the son of Nun, until after Nehemiah and his companions returned from the captivity: a period of nine hundred and eighty years. Neither Samuel, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, nor Josiah, observed it: and let it be remembered, that no censure is cast upon them for their neglect; nor any hint given that they were guilty of such neglect, until the close

of this long period; nor even then was any other notice taken of this subject but what is contained in this declaration of Nehemiah. Yet Nehemiah revived this solemnity; and has declared it to be obligatory upon that generation, and upon those of succeeding ages, in the same manner as if it had never been disused.

2. *There is no reason to suppose, that this fact would have been mentioned, if the sabbath had been exactly observed by the patriarchs, and by all who preceded them.* If *sabbaths*, in the plural, be supposed to denote the sabbath; then the first mention of this subject, made after the time of Moses, occurs in 1 Chron. xxiii. 31, in the instructions of David to Solomon concerning building the temple, at the distance of near five hundred years. The same word occurs thrice in the same book: *viz.* in the eighth and thirty-first chapters: in the two former of these instances, as a repetition, or allusion to the words of David; and both in the history of Solomon. The latter instance is in the history of Hezekiah, seven hundred and sixty-five years after the period above mentioned. The same word occurs in Isaiah; about seven hundred and thirty years from that period. The word *sabbath* is mentioned five times in the history of the Jewish church before the captivity. The *first* of them is a mere note concerning *the business* of the Kohathites; which was *to prepare the shew-bread every sabbath.* The time when it was written, was that of David; near five hundred years after this period. See 1 Chron. ix. 32. *The second* is the speech of the Shunamite's husband; *It is neither new moon nor sabbath:* not referring, in my opinion, to *the sabbath* at all: almost six hundred years from the above period. *The third* is in 2 Kings xi.; a part of the speech of Jehoiada to the rulers of Judah. *A third part of you that enter in on the sabbath, shall even be keepers of the king's house; and two parts of all you that go forth on the sabbath,* even they shall be *keepers of the watch of the house of the Lord.* Immediately after this speech it is also subjoined, that *the rulers took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath with them, that should go out on the sabbath, and they came to Jehoiada the priest.* These, it will be remembered, constitute but *a single instance* of mentioning the sabbath; an instance occurring at the distance of more

than six hundred years. Another instance occurs in the history of Ahaz; and is the following: *The covert for the sabbath turned he from the house of the Lord, for the king of Assyria:* seven hundred and fifty-two years. The word is also mentioned in Isaiah lvi, lviii, and lxv, about seven hundred and eighty years. These are all the instances in which the word occurs, either in prophecy or history, from the time of Moses till after the return of the captivity: a period of one thousand years.

Of this account it is to be observed,

First, that the word *sabbaths*, in the plural, is mentioned four times in the history of the Jewish church, and twice in the prophecy of Isaiah, within a period of seven hundred and eighty years. The first, second, and third, occurring incidentally in the mention of the duty of the priest in the orders of David: the second, a repetition of them by Solomon: the third, in an account of their execution. These together really constitute but one instance. The fourth occurs, incidentally also, in a sentence, giving, in almost the same words, an account of the same duty of the priests in the time of Hezekiah. The fifth is a censure of the Jews for the pollution of the new moons and sabbaths, uttered by the prophet Isaiah. The three first of these instances occur at the distance of about five hundred years, the others between seven and eight hundred from the time of the supposed institution. In but one of these, and that the last, is there any thing like an account of the manner in which the sabbath was kept or neglected. All the rest are merely incidental; and teach us nothing more, than that sabbaths were in existence, and were involved in the Jewish ritual.

Secondly; As *the sabbath* appears to be regularly distinguished from *sabbaths;* and as sabbaths are regularly joined with the *new moons* and other holidays of the Jews, which *the sabbath* never is; it is clear to me, that *the sabbath* is not alluded to in any of these instances.

Thirdly; The phrase, *the sabbath*, occurs in *three instances* (calling those in the account of Jehoiada one) in the history of the Jewish church before the captivity: all of them however entirely incidental; and containing no account of the sabbath as an institution; nor of the observance of it; nor of the neglect. This is all which is said of

it before the return from the Babylonish captivity, except what is said by the prophet Isaiah: and there is but a single passage in this prophet, in which this phrase is used with reference to the times of the Jewish dispensation.

We are thus come to this conclusion, that there are but *five passages* in which *the sabbath* is mentioned in the Jewish writings, from the time of Moses to the return of the captivity: one thousand years. *Two* of them are found in prophecy, and *three* of them in their history. The first of these is mentioned about five hundred years, the second six hundred, and the third seven hundred and fifty-two; and the two remaining ones, which are found in prophecy, near eight hundred; from the time of the supposed institution.

Now let me ask, can any person wonder, that in an account so summary as the history of the three first Jewish patriarchs, there should be no mention of the sabbath; when also during a period of about five hundred years, containing the histories of Joshua, of the Judges, particularly Samuel, and of Saul, it is not once mentioned? The question certainly cannot need an answer. The only wonder is, that so sensible a writer should have thought this an argument.

3. *God himself has, I apprehend, declared, that the sabbath was instituted at this time.*

For, in the first place, this is the true and only rational interpretation of the declarations in the second of Genesis. Dr. Paley supposes, that the words of the historian; *and God rested on the seventh day from all the work which he had made; and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made;* declare only *the reasons* for which God blessed and sanctified the sabbath, and not the *time* at which this was done; and that *it was mentioned at this time only on account of its connexion with the subject, and not because the blessing and sanctification took place at this period.* To this I answer, Moses has written this story exactly in the manner in which he has written the whole history of the creation, paradisiacal state, and the apostacy: nay, almost the whole of the history contained in the book of Genesis. There is as much reason to believe, that the sabbath was blessed and sanctified at this time, from

the manner in which the story is written, as there is to believe, that our first parents were turned out of Paradise before the birth of Cain and Abel. The order of time is, I apprehend, exactly observed in the history, except where the historian has taken up again a particular part of the history for the purpose of detailing it, and has, for this end, interrupted the general course of his narrative. Of the justice of this observation the bare reading of the story will I think convince any person, who has not a preconceived opinion to support.

What is thus sufficiently evident from the narrative, God appears to me to have decided in the following words of the text: *For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is; and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed* or sanctified *it.* Here God, repeating the very words of the narrative, declares, that he had already blessed and sanctified the sabbath, at some time preceding that at which this command was promulgated. The sabbath therefore was blessed and sanctified before this command was given. That this was not done at the time when Dr. Paley supposes the sabbath to have been instituted, nor at any period between the first sabbath and the giving of the law, seems to me clear from this; that there is not a single hint given of the subject, either at the time of the supposed institution, or in any other part of the Mosaic dispensation, except that in the second of Genesis. That the blessing was then given must, I think, be concluded, because God himself, relating this great transaction, adopts the same language; and says, *wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.* That the blessing of the sabbath was a past transaction is unquestionable. There is no hint concerning the existence of it, but in these two instances: and in both these it is immediately connected with God's finishing the creation, and resting on the seventh day.

4. *That it was instituted at the beginning is evident from the fact, that other nations, who could not have derived it from Moses, regarded the seventh day as holy.*

Hesiod says, "Εβδομον ἱερον ημαρ:" "The seventh day is holy."

Homer and Callimachus give it the same title.

Theophilus of Antioch says, concerning the seventh day, "the day which all mankind celebrate."

Porphyry says, "The Phœnicians consecrated one day in seven as holy."

Linus says, "A seventh day is observed among saints, or holy people."

Lucian says, "The seventh day is given to school-boys as a holy day."

Eusebius says, "Almost all the philosophers and poets acknowledge the seventh day as holy."

Clemens Alexandrinus says, "The Greeks, as well as the Hebrews, observe the seventh day as holy."

Josephus says, "No city of Greeks or barbarians can be found which does not acknowledge a seventh-day's rest from labour."

Philo says, "The seventh day is a festival to every nation."

Tibullus says, "The seventh day, which is kept holy by the Jews, is also a festival of the Roman women."

The several nations here referred to cannot, it is plain, have fallen upon this practice by chance. It is certain, they did not derive it from the Jews. It follows therefore, that they received it by tradition from a common source: and that source must have been Noah and his family.

III. To the argument from the insertion of this command in the decalogue, Dr. Paley answers, that *the distinction between positive and moral precepts,* or in his language between *positive and natural duties, was unknown to the simplicity of ancient language:* meaning, I suppose, *that it was unknown to the ancients, and among others, to Moses:* otherwise I cannot see how the observation is applicable to the question.

I confess myself surprised at this answer. Did not God understand this distinction, when he wrote the decalogue? Did he not know, that this distinction would afterward be made and understood in all its influence? Was not the decalogue written for all who should read the Scriptures? Was it not so written, as to be adapted to the use of all for whom it was written? Did not God discern, that this distinction was founded in the nature of things; and did

he not foresee, that, although the Israelites should not perceive it during any period of their national existence, yet it still would be perceived by innumerable others of mankind? Did he not provide effectually for this fact, whenever it should happen; and for all the difficulties and doubts which might arise from the want of such a distinction?

From this observation, and several others, Dr. Paley appears to consider the decalogue as written by Moses, in the same manner as the other parts of the Pentateuch; and as having no more authority, than the civil and ceremonial law of the Israelites; unless where this authority is discernible in the nature of the commands themselves. As this opinion appears not only erroneous, but dangerous, I shall oppose it with the following reasons.

First; The law of the Israelites, both civil and ceremonial, is distinguished from the decalogue, in this great particular: *that* was written by Moses in a book: *this* was first spoken by the voice of God, and then twice written by his finger on tables of stone, amid all the awful splendours of Mount Sinai.

Secondly; Moses, after reciting the decalogue in Deuteronomy v. immediately subjoins these words; *The Lord spake unto all your assembly in the Mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them on two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me. And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness (for the mountain did burn with fire), that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders: and ye said, Behold the Lord our God hath shewed us his glory, and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God doth talk with man; and he liveth. Now therefore why should we die? For this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, we shall die. For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, and hath lived?*

To this petition God consented; and promised to deliver his remaining precepts to Moses, and through him to Israel. Why was this distinction made? Why was the de-

calogue spoken by the voice, and written by the finger, of God? And why, in the emphatical language of Moses, did *he add no more?* The only reason which can be alleged is the transcendent dignity and importance of these commands. The view which Moses himself had of the total distinction between the decalogue, and the rest of the law written by him, is evident from this fact, that he commanded the Israelites to write them plainly, after they had passed over Jordan, upon great stones, plastered with plaster, and set up by the congregation near the altar which they were directed to build.* Why were they thus distinguished here?

Thirdly; Christ has distinguished them in a similar manner. When the young ruler came to Christ, and asked *what good thing he should do, that he might have eternal life;* Christ said to him, *Thou knowest the commandments.* The young man asked *which.* Christ in reply repeated five of the commands in the second table, and the summary which contains them all. This shews beyond a doubt, that *the commandments* was a name appropriated to the decalogue; and denoted the same superiority to all other commands, as the name, *the Bible,* or *the Book,* denotes with respect to all other books.

Again; Christ, in answer to the scribe who asked him *which is the first and great commandment,* recites the two great commands which Moses had made the sum of the decalogue; and adds, *On these two commands hang all the law and the prophets.* In other words, *On these two commands is suspended the whole volume of the Old Testament.* What can be a stronger testimony of the superiority of the decalogue to every other part of that volume?

Fourthly; St. Paul, Rom. xiii. 9, says, *For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Here the apostle, after reciting five of the commands contained in the second table of the decalogue, adds, *If there be any other commandment.* Is not this direct proof, that he regarded the decalogue as containing all those, which were by way of eminence *the com-*

* See Kennicott's dissertations.

*mandments of God,* and as separated by a broad line of distinction from every other precept?

Fifthly; It is well known that the Jews always considered the decalogue as entirely separated from every other part of the Old Testament. The prophets who succeeded Moses, did nothing as moral teachers but explain and enforce it. Christ declared that *sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or one tittle of this law shall pass, until all be fulfilled.* The apostles have enforced no other precepts, as obligatory upon Christians. The Jews have at this day these commands written out in large letters, and hung up in their synagogues as solemn monitors to all who enter them of their duty. In a manner correspondent with this have they ever been regarded by Christians. They are at this day proverbially known by the name of *the ten commandments,* and *the moral law.*

St. Paul, in a passage which ought not to be omitted on this occasion, Eph. vi. 1—3, reciting the fifth command, says, *This is the first commandment with promise.* But God had given to Noah, to Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses, and to the Israelites, many commands, and annexed to them many promises, before the law was delivered from Mount Sinai. In what sense then was the fifth command *the first to which a promise was annexed?* Plainly in this sense only; that it is the first in the decalogue which has this mark of distinction. In the eye of St. Paul, therefore, the decalogue contained all those which he thought proper to call *the commandments;* and was, in his view of a character, totally distinct, and totally superior to every other part of the Old Testament.

As the apostle recites this command to the Ephesians, who were Gentiles, as obligatory on them no less than on the Jews; it is clear, that the whole decalogue, unless some part of it has been plainly disannulled, is entirely obligatory on Christians. Had there been any distinction in this respect between the different precepts of this law, St. Paul must, it would seem, have made it on this occasion. He would, at least, have made it somewhere; and not have left so important a subject without a single note of illustration.

IV. *Dr. Paley says, that St. Paul evidently appears to con-*

*sider the sabbath as a part of the Jewish ritual, and not binding upon Christians as such: let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath-days; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.* Col. ii. 16, 17.

To this observation I answer, first, that this passage refers not in any sense to the sabbath; but merely to the ordinary holy days of the Jews. The burden of proving the contrary lies upon the disciples of Dr. Paley.

Secondly; If this be denied, I assert, that it refers to the seventh day only, and not at all to the Christian sabbath. Until the contrary is proved, I shall consider this answer as sufficient: especially, as the Christian sabbath is not in the Scriptures, and was not by the primitive church, called *the sabbath;* but *the first day of the week,* and *the Lord's day.*

V. The same writer says, *that the observation of the sabbath was not one of the articles enjoined by the apostles in Acts* xv. *upon the Christian Gentiles.*

I answer; neither was abstinence from *theft, murder, lying, coveting, profaneness, or idolatry.*

VI. Dr. Paley asserts, that *the observation of the sabbath is not expressly enjoined in the New Testament.*

To this I answer first, that the text is in my own view an explicit injunction of this duty. But as this opinion has been contested; as the paragraph in which it is contained is confessedly obscure; as it would require one whole discourse of this nature to consider it sufficiently; and as the text was written many years after the Christian sabbath was effectually established; I observe,

Secondly, that the Christian sabbath was originally introduced into the church much more successfully and happily, than it could have been done by an express injunction.

In order to judge of this subject, it is necessary to bring up to our view the situation of those to whom the gospel was first preached. These were all Jews; intensely bi-

goted to every part of their religion, and particularly to their sabbath. The day had been appointed by God himself; and was acknowledged to be divinely appointed by Christ and his apostles. The experiment of interfering with the feelings of the Jews concerning the sabbath, even in the most lawful manner, had been sufficiently tried by Christ to discourage the apostles from every unnecessary attempt of this nature. Accordingly the apostles pursued a peaceful and unobjectionable method. They celebrated at times, and probably always, the Jewish sabbath, when they were among Jews. The Jews at the same time, without any objection, yielded to their example and authority in celebrating the Christian worship on the day of Christ's resurrection. They were circumcised, but they were also willingly baptized. They celebrated the passover; but willingly added to it the Lord's supper. They prayed in the temple; but they willingly united also in the prayers and praises of Christian assemblies, holden in private houses, or in the fields. While the Jewish service was neither attacked nor neglected, they made not the least objection to that of the Christian church. In this manner all these ordinances grew into use, veneration, and habit; and in the end gained such a possession of the mind, and such a strength of authority, as could neither be overthrown nor weakened.

When the apostles came to declare in form, that the Jewish worship was to cease; the minds of the church were so well prepared to receive this declaration, that it was carried into a general execution. Difficulties and divisions arose indeed about this subject in several churches; particularly about circumcision; and produced a course of serious contention. What would have been the case, had this part of the system been begun at an earlier period?

About the Christian sabbath no dispute appears to have existed during the three first centuries. All the churches appear to have adopted it, and to have neglected the Jewish sabbath, without any difficulty. Was not this method of introducing so important a change dictated by true wisdom; and a better method than any other?

The example of the apostles is an example to all Christians. Were we then to give up the point contested in, the

objection; we have still such a law in this example; and so efficacious, that probably no doctrine has been more generally received, than that of the Christian sabbath, and no duty more generally performed than the observation of it, down to the present time.

The absolute necessity of establishing the doctrines and duties of Christianity among the Jews, in the infancy of the church, has been shewn in a former discourse. I shall only add, that it seems impossible to have introduced among that people the Christian sabbath in any other manner than that which was adopted by the apostles, unless their whole character had been miraculously changed.

# SERMON CVIII.

## FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

### THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SABBATH IS TO BE OBSERVED.

*If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him not doing thine own ways nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob, thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*—ISA. LVIII. 13, 14.

IN the first of the discourses which I have delivered concerning the fourth command, I proposed,

I. *To consider the perpetual establishment of the sabbath;* and,

II. *The manner in which it is to be observed.*

The former of these doctrines, together with the objections against it, has been made the subject of the three preceding sermons. The latter shall be the theme of the present discourse.

The text is the most minute, and perfect summary of the duties incumbent on mankind with respect to this holy day which is contained in the Scriptures. It is a prediction to the Jews, announcing, that if they will perform these duties, God will greatly prosper them with spiritual and temporal blessings, in the land of their fathers. In my own opinion it especially respects a period yet to come. In examining this subject, I shall endeavour,

I. *To point out the nature and extent of these duties;* and,

II. *To shew, that they are binding upon us.*

I. *I shall endeavour to point out the nature and extent of these duties.*

In examining this subject I shall adopt the scheme of the text; and mention,

1. *The things from which we are to abstain;* and,

2. *The things which we are to perform.*

(1.) *We are bound to abstain from sin in thought, conversation, and conduct.*

All who read the gospel know, or may know perfectly, that sin may be as easily and as extensively committed in thought, as in word or action; and that the real seat of sin is in the heart. With the reformation of our hearts then we are always to begin our duty. We may as easily and grossly profane the sabbath, so far as ourselves only are concerned, by thoughts which are unsuited to its nature, as we can by any actions whatever. If our minds are intent on our business or our pleasures; if our affections wander after them; if we are cold or lukewarm with respect to our religious duties; if we are negligent of a serious and cordial attention to them; if we regard with impatience the interruption, occasioned to our secular concerns; if we wish the institution had not been appointed, or the time, in which it is to be kept lessened; then plainly we do not *esteem the sabbath a delight,* nor abstain from *finding our own pleasure.* So long as this is the state of our thoughts; all our outward conformity to this *precept* (for such is really the nature of the text) will be merely hypocritical. Every *oblation* from such a mind will be *vain;* and all its *incense an abomination. The sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies* among persons who act in this manner, will be such

as *God cannot away with;* and their solemn *meeting* will be *iniquity*.

The heart gives birth to all the movements of *the tongue*. We profane the sabbath, whenever we employ the time in *worldly conversation*. Such conversation is, in the text, denoted by the phrase, *speaking thine own words: thine own* being supplied by the translators. I think this supplement rational, since in the two preceding clauses we find *doing* THINE OWN *ways*, and *finding thine own pleasure*. Bishop Lowth, from similar phraseology in the ninth verse, supposes it should be *vain words*. The meaning however will differ immaterially.

Such conversation is like our thoughts, directed indifferently to subjects of business and of pleasure; and in both cases the sabbath is subverted, and so far as this conversation extends, is changed from a holy into a secular day. God is robbed of his rights, and of his service: and we are prevented from attaining, and from a disposition to attain, the holiness which is indispensable to salvation.

There is no way in which the sabbath is more easily, more insensibly, more frequently, and more fatally, violated than this. Temptations to it are always at hand. The transgression always seems a small one; usually a dubious one at the worst; and often, no transgression at all. Multitudes of persons, of sober and well-meaning dispositions, nay, multitudes, as there is but too much reason to fear, of professing Christians, beginning with religious subjects, slide imperceptibly towards those which are considered as moral in such a degree as scarcely to differ from religious ones; thence to secular themes bordering upon these; and thence to mere matters of business or amusement. Such persons, before they are aware, find themselves occupied in conversing about the affairs of the neighbourhood; the strangers who are at church; the new dresses; fashions; business; diversions, news, and politics. To these they are led by *mere worldly conversation* concerning the prayers, the psalmody, or the sermon: as having been well or ill devised, written, spoken, or performed; by a history merely secular, of the sickness and deaths in the neighbourhood, or elsewhere, or of the dangerous or fatal accidents which have lately happened; the state of the

weather; the season; the crops; the prospects; the affairs of the family; and by innumerable other things of a similar nature. The next step is, ordinarily, an habitual employment of this holy day in open, cool, and self-satisfied, conversation about business; schemes of worldly pursuits; bargains; gains, and losses. It is not to be understood, that Christians go all these lengths. It is my real belief, however, that they go much farther than they can justify; and fail in this manner of their duty; their improvement in the Christian life; their proper exemplariness of character; the evidence of their piety, which would spring from these sources; the hope which it would inspire; the peace which would accompany them; and the joy in which they would delightfully terminate. Many sober men, however, who but for this very conduct might probably become Christians, go all these lengths; and thus lose insensibly their tenderness of conscience; their soberness of mind; and their desire as well as their hope of eternal life. Men less well-principled start originally at *the end* of this career; and thus annihilate the sabbath at once: bidding, without anxiety, a final adieu to the sabbath itself, and to its rich, exalted, and immortal blessings.

The profanation of the sabbath by actions is seen and acknowledged by all decent men, who acknowledge it as a day, consecrated by God to himself. Actions are so open to the view of mankind; are so definite a proof of the disposition; and, when violations of a known rule of duty, constitute so gross a proof of impiety; that all doubts concerning the true construction to be given of them vanish whenever they appear. The common and favourite modes of profaning the sabbath, in this way, are spending our time in dress; in ministering to a luxurious appetite; in walking or riding for amusement; in writing letters of friendship; in visiting; and in reading books which are not of a religious, but merely of a decent character, and ultimately those which are formed to be the means of amusement and sport. The end of this progress, generally esteemed more gross, though perhaps in many instances not more, and in others less sinful, is the devotion of this sacred day to downright business. Persons who go this length, occupy the time in writing letters of business: post-

ing their accounts; visiting post-offices; making bargains; transmitting money to their correspondents; going or sending to markets; making journeys, at first with and afterward without pretences of necessity; and ultimately, labouring openly in the ordinary employments of life. This is what is called in the text *doing our own ways. A man's way*, in scriptural language, is the customary course of his life.

All these things, whether existing in thought, word, or action, are called *our own*, in contradistinction to *those which are God's:* that is, to those which are required of us by God: and every one of them is prohibited in the text.

(2.) *We are required to abstain from idleness.*

Although the sabbath is never to be spent in secular business or amusement, it is still to be invariably a day of industrious exertion. There are some persons who feel too much regard to the dictates of their consciences, to public opinion, to the commands of God, or to all of them, to consume the sabbath in business or amusement. Still having no relish for the duties of the day, they spend it in idleness: satisfied with abstaining from those which they esteem the grosser and more direct violations of this divine institution. Accordingly they lounge about their houses, gardens, or farms; and waste the season of salvation in sloth, sleep, or such a course of existence as resembles that of the oyster; a state bordering upon the line, which separates animated beings from those which are inanimate. This course of conduct is an annihilation of the sabbath; the death of the day; and a frustration of all the designs and blessings of God connected with this heavenly institution. The sabbath was intended to be the means of honouring God, and of saving the souls of men. But idleness is always dishonourable to God, and hostile to the salvation of the soul. Both of these great objects are accomplished by *him* only who is *not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*

(3.) *We are bound to abstain, with peculiar caution, from acknowledged sins upon this holy day.*

"The abstinence which I have hitherto specified, regards business and amusement, ordinarily lawful on other days. From that conduct and those thoughts which are *universally*

sinful, we are bound to abstain, with peculiar care, upon the sabbath; because then they are peculiarly heinous. The sacred nature of this day, and the solemn consecration of it by God to himself, together with all the advantages which we enjoy for religious instruction, and for all the duties of piety, furnish such a body of motives to our abstinence from sin, as cannot be resisted without peculiar guilt. Every sin committed upon this day, is aggravated by the fact that we have resisted these motives. At the same time, we are, by its very nature, so withdrawn from the world, so secured against temptation, and so much at leisure for solemn meditation, and for the establishment of firm resolutions of obedience in our minds, that, if we sin upon this day, we sin with fewer inducements to the iniquity, than upon other occasions. He who indulges his wickedness on the sabbath, will be in danger of rioting in it on the other days of the week.

It hardly needs to be remarked, that sinful ways are peculiarly *our own*, and eminently opposed to those which are required by God.

In all the above-recited particulars, those who are guilty of them openly violate the law of God; squander the accepted time; waste and abuse the means of grace; and lessen, sabbath by sabbath, their hopes of eternal life.

*The duties which we are to perform, are generally all the various offices of religion.* Good men, in ancient times, entered on the sabbath-day into the house of the Lord with praise and prayer. The law, the Psalms, and the prophets, were *read in the synagogues every sabbath-day.* They *feared God in the assembly of his saints: they praised him for his mighty acts; uttered abundantly the memory of his great goodness; and sung of his righteousness. They went on from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appearing before God.* They esteemed *a day in his courts as better than a thousand. Their souls longed, yea, even fainted, for the courts of the Lord; their heart and their flesh cried out for the living God.* Accordingly, *the Lord God was* to them *a sun, and a shield. He gave* them *grace and glory; and withheld from them no good thing.* In the same manner the early Christians *esteemed the sabbath a delight, and*

*the holy of the Lord honourable.* In the times of the apostles, *they continued in fellowship, in prayer, and in breaking of bread.* They sung *psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.* They prophesied; taught the doctrines of the Scriptures; uttered and interpreted revelation; and collected alms for such saints as were in peculiar circumstances of distress. All these examples abundantly shew us, that good men, during the ages of inspiration, steadily accorded, and thought it their duty to accord, with the requisitions contained in the text. What was *their* duty is *ours.* All these solemn services, therefore, and others connected with them, it is incumbent on us to perform *in spirit and in truth.* We are *to join ourselves to the Lord, to serve him,* according to the prediction of Isaiah concerning us and the other Gentiles; *to love the name of the Lord; to keep the sabbath from polluting it; and to take hold of his covenant.* Particularly,

(1.) *We are to perform all the duties of public worship.*

The sabbath, as has been observed, was originally appointed for the commemoration of the divine glory manifested in creating the world; and for the attainment and improvement of holiness in man. The manner in which we should commemorate the glory of God in the work of creation on this day, is sufficiently taught us by the manner in which the first sabbath was celebrated. Then, we are informed, *the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.* In the same manner was the work of the new creation, and the divine glory displayed in it, celebrated by the same illustrious beings, according to the prophetical account given in the sixty-eighth psalm, of this wonderful event: an account expressly applied to it by the apostle Paul in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. *The chariots of God are twenty thousand; even thousands of angels. The Lord is among them, as in Sinai; as in the holy place.* The very hymn which they sung seems to be transmitted to us in the following words; *Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also; that the Lord God might dwell among them.*

The manner in which holiness and salvation are to be obtained, is everywhere taught in the gospel. *The truth* of

God, in the hands of the divine Spirit, is the great instrument, by which we are *made free from the bondage of corruption. Faith,* we know, *cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* This word is therefore to be faithfully explained and enforced by the preacher; and faithfully received by those who hear him. The prayers and the praises of every religious assembly, are to spring from the heart; and are to ascend up before the throne of infinite mercy, with dependance, with confidence, with love, with reverence, with gratitude, with hope, and with joy. Our prayers and our praises are also to be presented in the name of Christ, as the great and glorious *propitiation for the sins of men,* and *the true and living way* of access to God. They are to be presented with faith in his name; *that faith* which occupies the whole heart, and alone interests us in the blessings of redemption.

Christians, at the same time, are to unite in the administration and celebration of the evangelical ordinances; baptism and the Lord's supper: and are thus, in a peculiar and most affecting manner, to commemorate the glory of Christ manifested in the wonderful work of the new creation.

*All* these *things* are to *be done decently, and in order.* At the same time, they are to be performed with plainness, simplicity, and no unnecessary rites. The Jewish worship was intended, by its ceremonious magnificence, to strike the imagination, during the early and ignorant periods of society. To this end it was perfectly fitted. All its services were calculated to affect the senses in the deepest manner, and to find, through them, access to the heart. The gospel, on the contrary, is addressed directly to the understanding; and makes its way to the heart by means of the power of conscience. Unnecessary rites are here both useless and noxious: since they allure the thoughts away from the doctrines and precepts which are inculcated to the ceremonies by which they are surrounded. In this manner, the spiritual worship of the gospel is ever in danger of becoming a mere *bodily exercise,* unprofitable in itself, and destructive of piety. The ceremonies of the Romish church exterminated its devotion; and became, extensively, the cause, as well as the effect, of that corruption,

which by men of real religion has been justly regarded as a prodigy.

(2.) *On this holy day, also, we are bound to perform the various private duties of religion.*

The worship of the family, and that of the closet, are the duty of all families, and of all individuals, every day they live. Equally is it the duty of all men to spend a part of every day in self-examination; in religious meditation; and in contemplation on the perfections and works of God, on the character of Christ and the wonders of redemption. The Scriptures especially, and other religious books generally, are to be read, pondered, and cordially received. The amendment of the soul, and victory over sin and temptation, are to be planned, resolved on, and achieved. We are to humble ourselves before God; to devote ourselves anew to his service; to cherish the duties of religion; and universally to cultivate the Christian character.

At the same time, children and servants are to be carefully instructed in the great and plain doctrines and duties of religion; to be restrained, in the same manner as ourselves, from all worldly pursuits; and to be presented by us with such persuasive examples of piety, as may engage them to reverence and embrace the gospel.

Universally, our time, our thoughts, our conversation, and our actions, are all to be devoted to God. This indeed is in a sense true of every day. But on other days it is our duty to labour in our worldly business; and, while our thoughts are engaged by pursuits of this nature, it is impossible that they should be also engaged by religious objects with sufficient intenseness and constancy to fulfil all the demands, either of our interest, or of our duty. On the sabbath, we are withdrawn from all worldly pursuits. A solemn pause is made in the business of life. A happy season of leisure is furnished to us for obtaining our salvation. Then, no worldly business is to intrude; no worldly pleasure to solicit; no worldly thought to interfere. The holy nature of the day, and the peculiarly solemn nature of its services, conspire, with eminent felicity, to render all the duties which have been specified, easy, undisturbed, solemn, impressive, and profitable. This then is to be carefully seized, and anxiously husbanded, as a golden opportunity for performing them all.

(3.) *The sabbath is to be employed, so far as circumstances demand, in performing works of necessity and mercy.*

Our authority for this assertion is complete in the declaration of God; *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.* In the illustrations of this precept by our Saviour, and in his example, it is equally complete. What these works are, beyond the direct import of this example, we are to judge as carefully and conscientiously as we can. Generally, it is to be observed, that as little of our time, as the nature of the case demands, is to be employed in these works; and the remainder to be devoted to those duties of religion, which were the original objects of the sabbath. Wherever the time required is so great, as to be disproportioned to the value of the necessity in question; it is to be given up. That necessary work, which requires but a moment, may be lawful; when it would become unlawful, if it required an hour. All works, both of necessity and mercy, are to be regarded as duties, which we are bound to perform; and never as indulgences, which we are permitted to take.

*The time at which the peculiar duties of the sabbath are to commence, is, in my opinion, the time, when darkness commences on the evening of Saturday.* For this opinion the following reasons may be alleged.

First; *The natural day commenced with darkness.* After God had created the chaos, darkness rested upon it for a certain period. This darkness, and the light which succeeded it, are declared to have constituted *the first day.* In the same manner are reckoned the five succeeding days of the creation.

Secondly; *The sabbath, at its original institution, was a natural day.* This is clear, because we are told, that *God rested the seventh day:* and from the manner in which the six preceding days were reckoned, we have the fullest proof, that he who by his own choice reckoned *them* in this manner, reckoned the *seventh day* in the same manner.

Thirdly; *When the sabbath was renewedly enjoined upon the Israelites, it was required to be kept as a natural day.* This we know, because no alteration of the original institution is specified in the fourth command; and because, in Lev. xxiii. 32, God says to that people concerning the great day of atonement, *From even unto even shall ye celebrate your sabbath.*

Fourthly; *The Jewish sabbath commenced with the darkness; or with the time which we denote by the word candle lighting.* This is evident from Nehem. xiii. 19; *And it came to pass that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath,* &c. It is here evident, that the sabbath, had not commenced on Friday evening, when the gates of Jerusalem *began* to be dark; or, in our customary language, when *the dusk of the evening commenced* in that city. The sabbath also, *as a natural day,* began originally at the same time: the first day of the creation having commenced with absolute darkness. The time of darkness to us, is the time when we can no longer see, so as to transact business by the light of the sun.

Fifthly; *The Christian sabbath is the first day of the week; and a natural day; because there is no hint given us, in the New Testament, of any alteration made, or to be made, in this respect.* Dr. Macknight informs us, that the ancient Christians began their sabbath on the evening of Saturday. Some Christians have supposed, that *the time when our Lord arose from the dead, is that at which the present sabbath ought to be begun.* This is evidently an error; because *that time is not declared in the New Testament, and therefore cannot be known by us.* Accordingly, these Christians begin the sabbath *at midnight:* a time of human appointment merely. This seems to me unwarrantable.

II. *I shall now attempt to shew, that the duties of the sabbath are all binding upon us.*

On this subject I observe,

1. *That the example of God in resting from his work of creation, and of Christ in resting from the work of redemption, is authoritatively binding upon us; and requires us to rest from our own lawful labours in a similar manner.*

2. *The fourth command, which has, I trust, been shewn to be equally obligatory on all men, requires the same rest from us, which it required from the Israelites.*

3. *The original institution, the examples of God, the Father, and the Son, and the injunctions of the fourth command, require, in substance, all these duties.* The duties which they expressly require, cannot be performed to any valuable purpose, unless all the duties specified in this

discourse are also performed. The true meaning and real extent of these examples and injunctions, as they respected the Jews, are explained in the comments of the prophets; particularly of the prophet Isaiah, concerning this subject. The text is the most copious and definite exhibition of this nature contained in the Scriptures. In chapter lvi. of the same prophet, is found, also, a comprehensive account of the same duties: and we have several other, less particular and less impressive, explanations, in other passages of the Scriptures. These injunctions and examples, then, demanded, in the view of the Spirit of inspiration, all these duties of the Israelites. Of course, this was the true tenor of these examples and injunctions. But, if I mistake not, I have proved both to be no less obligatory on Christians, than on the Israelites. The same examples and injunctions have therefore the same tenor with respect to *us*, and bind us to exactly the same duties.

4. *The New Testament has no where dispensed with any part of these duties.*

It has been often thought, that Christ has released his followers from some part of the duties of the sabbath, and in some degree from that strictness in observing it, which were originally required of the Jews. Observations to this amount I have not unfrequently seen and heard; but, exclusively of the things observed by Dr. Paley, and mentioned in the last discourse, I have never been informed of the particulars from which Christians are thus supposed to have been released; nor do I know in what passages of the New Testament they are supposed to be contained. Dr. Paley believes, that the sabbath was never at all obligatory on Christians. According to his scheme, therefore, it was impossible for Christ to release them from these duties; because they were never incumbent on them. Where those who make this supposition find their warrant for it in the discourses of Christ, or of his apostles, I confess myself unable to determine. The observations which our Saviour makes as an exposition of several parts of the decalogue in his sermon on the mount, he prefaces with these remarkable declarations: *Think not, that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil: for verily, I say unto you, Till heaven and earth*

*pass; one jot, or one tittle, shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.* After these declarations it is impossible, that Christ should be rationally believed to have altered at all the duties of the sabbath, much less to have annihilated it, unless he has done it somewhere in plain unequivocal language. But no such language, on this subject, can be found in the New Testament. Until something of this nature shall be definitely pointed out; the duties of the sabbath must be acknowledged to have been left by Christ and his apostles exactly as they found them: and all declarations to the contrary must be regarded as merely gratuitous and presumptive.

5. *As the religious privileges of Christians are declared to be superior to those of the Jews, they cannot be supposed to be lessened with respect to the sabbath, unless this fact is directly asserted.*

If the duties of Christians on the sabbath are lessened, either in number or degree; then their religious privileges are rendered just so far inferior to those of the Jews. The duties of the sabbath are all privileges of a high and glorious nature; and cannot fail to be accounted such by every good man. I speak not here of the regulations of the civil laws of the Jews: these have nothing to do with the subject of the present discussion. I speak of the sabbath as instituted on the seventh day; as instituted immediately after the creation was finished; as enjoined anew in the fourth command of the decalogue; and as explained and enforced by the prophets; particularly Isaiah. It was a high religious privilege to a Jew to have one whole day in seven divinely consecrated to the duties of religion; to be required to *esteem the sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord honourable; and to turn away his foot from finding his own pleasure* on that sacred day. It was a combination of glorious privileges to a Jew *to keep the sabbath from polluting it; to join himself on that day to the Lord; to be his servant; to take hold of his covenant; to be brought to the holy mountain of God; to be made joyful in his house of prayer; to delight himself in the Lord;* and to find his various solemn services *accepted* by his Creator. But if these duties, or any of them, be lessened in number or degree; just so far are the privileges of a Christian inferiorto those

of a Jew. Which of these privileges would a Christian be willing to give up? Which of them does the gospel require him to relinquish?

I shall conclude this discourse with a summary enumeration of several motives, which strongly solicit our exact observance of the sabbath.

1. *Such an observance of the sabbath is required by the command of God.*

2. *It is enforced by the divine example.*

God rested on the seventh day; the day after the creation was ended. Christ rested on the first day; the day after the new creation was finished. This twofold example of JEHOVAH is of infinite authority; and enjoins, in the most expressive language, the faithful imitation of all mankind.

3. *The nature of the duties enjoined upon the sabbath, demands of us such an observance.*

The duties of the sabbath are all of a religious and holy nature. Such duties can never be successfully or profitably performed, when mingled with secular business or amusements. These will both distract the attention of the mind, and withdraw it from that clear, strong, affecting sense of spiritual and divine objects, in which the peculiar benefit of the sabbath is found. The soul, in this case, will be divided between God and Mammon, between the love of the world and the love of God. The consequence cannot but be foreseen. The world will predominate; God will be forgotten; and dishonoured, if not forgotten: the soul will cease from a heavenly character; debase its pure and exalted affections; lose those refined and noble views of celestial objects, which are fitted both to inspire and to cherish devotion; cease to stretch its wings towards heaven; and fall down to earth loaded with a burden of gross cares, and dragged to the ground by an encumbering mass of sensual gratifications.

At the same time, *it is far easier to observe the sabbath wholly, than to observe it in part.* He who intends to divide it between earthly and spiritual pursuits, will never know where to draw the line of division. Perpetually will he find himself wandering, now towards religion, and now towards the world; while his conscience will be uncea-

singly embarrassed by fears, that he has neglected his duty, and by doubts concerning what it is. *There is no such thing as a half-way performance of our duty.* If such a performance had in fact been required or allowed, we should have been distressed by unceasing perplexity. Happy is it for us, that an ordinance of this nature cannot be found in the Scriptures.

4. *The blessing of the sabbath is promised to such an observance.* The text is an illustrious proof of this. *If thou do all the things,* says God, *required in the first verse; then shalt thou delight thyself in* JEHOVAH; *and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.* Not, if thou do a part of these things. There is no promise to a divided service: there is no blessing connected with it. He therefore who wishes for the blessing of God upon his religious labours, must look for it only in the strict and faithful observance of the duties which he has required.

5. *It is demanded by our own highest interest.*

The sabbath is eminently *the day of salvation. On Zion the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.* On that holy day, and in the holy place, this incomprehensible blessing is still to be found. Where that day is not observed, and that place is not frequented, this blessing ceases to descend. If we love ourselves then; if we love our families; if we love our country; if we love mankind; we shall exert ourselves, to the utmost, to uphold the sabbath in its purity, in our hearts, in our conversation, and in our conduct. We shall *keep the sabbath from polluting it;* shall observe it with the most faithful exactness; and by precept and example solemnly recommend it to the exact observance of others.

# SERMON CIX.

## THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

### REFLECTIONS ON THE SABBATH.

*Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day.* EXOD. XX. 11.

IN the four preceding discourses, I have considered *the perpetual establishment of the sabbath,* and *the manner in which it is to be observed;* and have endeavoured to *answer such objections* as occurred to me against the doctrines which I have felt myself bound to maintain concerning these subjects. I shall now close my observations on the sabbath, *with some of those reflections* which this very solemn and interesting subject naturally suggests to a serious mind.

The first *consideration which strikes such a mind, when contemplating the sabbath, is the pre-eminent wisdom of this divine institution.*

Wisdom, as applied to conduct, denotes the choice of desirable ends, and the selection of happy means for their accomplishment. The ends aimed at in the institution of the sabbath are numerous, and all of them eminently desirable. The means by which they are accomplished, are at the same time eminently happy. The sabbath, and the things immediately connected with it, are the amount of them all.

Among these ends let me remark; since God himself has been pleased to mention it, and to mention it in the fourth command of the decalogue; *the provision which this holy day furnishes of a season of rest to labouring animals.*

*A righteous man regards the life of his beast,* says the wisest of all men, Prov. x. 12. In this fact we behold a strong resemblance of a righteous man to his Creator. The goodness of this glorious being is forcibly displayed in

the provision which he has made for the rest and comfort of labouring animals in the moral law. In the hands even of prudent and humane masters, it is clearly seen, that such animals are sufficiently employed when they labour six days of the week, and are released to rest and refreshment on the seventh. God, who perfectly knew what their strength was able to bear, and who perfectly foresaw how greatly they would be oppressed by avarice and cruelty, was pleased, in this solemn manner and at this early period, to provide for their relief, by securing to them the quiet and restoration of one day in seven. In this merciful provision the divine tenderness is displayed in a most amiable and edifying manner. The humble character of even these beings did not place them below the compassionate care of God. Elsewhere, he has commanded us to supply them with food. Here he has commanded us to furnish them with rest. In both cases he has taught us, that *the Lord is good and kind to all, and* that *his tender mercies are over all the works of his hands.* This indulgence to animals is enjoined with infinite authority; and secured by the same sanction which enforces justice and beneficence towards mankind. By bringing up this subject also in form thus solemnly, regularly, and often, he has formed our regard towards these creatures into a habit; and prevented us from the possibility of being inattentive to this duty.

*In the same manner are rest and refreshment secured to mankind.* Children and servants particularly are by this institution preserved from the oppression of severe masters, and the unfeeling demands of unnatural parents. Every industrious man will tell you, from his own experience, that the season of labour is sufficiently long, and this return of rest absolutely necessary for the preservation of health, and strength, and life; that greater toil would fatigue the bodily powers into decay; and that the weekly cessation from business, is not more frequent than our worldly interests clearly demand. Hence, unless when under the dominion of avarice, he will consider the sabbath as a benevolent provision for his true worldly interest. What will thus be approved by the man who labours voluntarily and for himself, cannot fail to be cordially welcomed by him who is compelled, through indigence, to toil for others.

the servant drudging for a hard master, and the child trembling under the rod of an unfeeling parent.

*Nor is the usefulness of the sabbath less visible in the promotion of neatness and cleanliness; especially among the inferior classes of mankind.* No person is willing to appear in a religious assembly, unless cleanly and decently dressed. So true is this, that probably in all countries where the sabbath is observed, every one, not prevented by absolute poverty, has what is proverbially called *a Sunday suit of clothes.* The spirit of cleanliness and decency, awakened by the return of this holy day, is *always* thus awakened. Excited every week, it is of course excited through the week; becomes an immoveable habit; extends its influence through all the concerns of human life; and in the end constitutes the standing character. *Individuals* are thus prevented from becoming brutes in their appearance; and *a nation* is fashioned into an entire and delightful contrast to the native dirt and slovenliness of man, always exhibited in so humiliating a manner by savages. The influence of this single fact on the comfort of human life cannot be calculated.

*Inseparably connected with this article, is the softness and civility of manners* to which the sabbath, more than any thing else, allures mankind. Every thing pertaining to the sabbath generates, of course this desirable conduct. The neatness of dress and the decency of appearance just mentioned strongly persuade to it. A person better dressed than in the ordinary manner, will regularly behave with more than ordinary decency, unless *habitually* thus dressed. The association in our thoughts between the dress and the manners (both of which are intended to make us appear with advantage), is instinctive and inseparable. Every thing connected with the sabbath also, inspires such views and affections as to contribute to the manners in question. We are of course united to a respectable assembly; on a sacred day; in a sacred place: upon a most affecting occasion; and for ends the most solemn and important in the universe. We are immediately before God, and are employed in his worship; in confessing our sins, in seeking the forgiveness of them, and in labouring to obtain an interest in his favour. We cannot here fail to

feel our needy, frail, guilty, dependant character; to see how little and insignificant we are; how unbecoming are pride, unkindness, and insolence; how becoming humility, modesty, condescension, and gentleness; how amiable, in the sight of God, is *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit;* and how necessary, for every purpose for which we have assembled, the establishment of these things in our hearts. From these considerations must spring of course, in every man who is not void of all propensity to that which is good, both gentleness of mind and sweetness of manners.

I have already glanced at *the tendency of the sabbath to abase our pride, and to remove our native ruggedness of disposition.* This part of the subject deserves a farther consideration. One of the chief deformities of character in the rich, the learned, and the great, is that haughtiness of mind, which, on account of their peculiar advantages, they are ever ready to feel; and one of the chief causes of suffering to the poor, the ignorant, and the powerless, is that insolence of behaviour which from this haughtiness they are compelled to endure. But when the superior classes of mankind assemble in the house of God, they sink at once, even in their own eyes, if they open them down to the same level with their fellow-worms. In the presence of him, *before whom all nations are as nothing,* the glare of splendour, the pride of wealth, the self-sufficiency of learning, and the loftiness of power, are annihilated in a moment. Those, who a little while before felt themselves to be rich, and wise, and great, find that they are poor, ignorant, little, guilty, odious to God, exposed to his wrath, and hopeless, except in the mere character of suppliants for mercy.

When a great man in the sanctuary looks around him on a mixed assembly of his equals and inferiors; he will be compelled often to feel, and secretly to confess, that his poor neighbour, whom perhaps he *would have disdained,* on other occasions, *to set with the dogs of his flock,* is in all probability more excellent, more wise, more lovely, and in every sense greater *in the sight of the Highest,* than himself. Nothing can humble pride more than the elevation above itself of those whom it despises. This elevation of the humble, this useful depression of the haughty, is no where more perfect than in the house of God.

Here, as will be realized from what has been already said, the poor and lowly rise of course above their usual level. *The rich and the poor*, says Solomon, *meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all.* In the house of God they *meet together* in a manner wholly peculiar; are placed exactly on the same level; and are more strongly than any where else reminded, that *the Lord is the maker of them all.* Here they assemble as creatures of the same God merely. Here all their earthly distinctions vanish; and a new distinction, formed only of sin and holiness, commences; which, unless terminated in the present world, will endure and widen for ever. Here then the poor man rises to his proper independence and distinction; forgets the depression of his circumstances: and, without the aid of pride, assumes an elevation of character, not less necessary to him for the faithful discharge of his duty, than the humility of the gospel to the lofty-minded. Thus the sabbath, like its author, *putteth down the mighty from their seats*, and *exalteth them of low degree.* How perfect, in this important particular, is an institution, which produces these opposite and indispensable benefits in those, whose situation so plainly and loudly demands them!

Another immense benefit of the sabbath is, *the instruction which it furnishes in morals and religion.*

The value of knowledge is admitted by all civilized men. It will usually, and ought ever, to be admitted also, that moral and religious knowledge is of far more value than any other. It is more necessary, more practical, more useful, more enlarging to the mind, more refined, and more exalted. The least acquaintance with the subject will place this assertion beyond a doubt.

As the knowledge itself is more valuable; so the sabbath furnishes means for obtaining it which are far cheaper, and far more efficacious, than were ever furnished by any other institution. Here, on a day devoted to no employment but the gaining of this knowledge, and the performance of those religious duties which unite with it in perfect harmony; in a place convenient and sacred; on an occasion infinitely important; and with the strong power of sympathy to aid and impress; a thousand persons are taught the best of all knowledge; the most useful to themselves, and

the most beneficial to mankind; for a less sum than must be expended by a twentieth part of their number, in order to obtain the same instruction in any other science. No device of the heathen philosophers, or of modern infidels, greatly as they have boasted of their wisdom, can be compared, as to its usefulness, with this. The sabbath particularly is *the only mean ever devised of communicating important instructions to the great mass of mankind.*

Here all may assemble, all may learn, from the prince to the beggar, from the man of gray hairs to the infant of days. Had the sabbath been a device of man, men would be able to boast of immensely greater ingenuity and wisdom, than they have hitherto displayed; and would be justly pronounced to have formed a more successful and more patriotic institution for the benefit of mankind, than any which is found on the page of history. Here a real and glorious equality of privileges is established, not only without confusion and discord, but with strong enforcements of peace and good order. In these great blessings all are here alike interested, and all partake alike.

*To the blessings of peace and good order universally,* the sabbath contributes also in a pre-eminent degree. Moral and religious knowledge is the knowledge of our duty, and of the rewards which God will give to such as perform it. To this knowledge the sabbath adds the highest motives to the performance which are found in the universe. All good, internal and external, in time and eternity, allures to it, as a direct and certain reward. All evil compels to it as a threatening, and deters from the omission as a punishment inevitable and endless. This knowledge and these motives the sabbath furnishes with a solemnity and force altogether unrivalled. From the house of God they are carried with us into every concern of life where duty is to be performed; and duty is to be performed in every concern. With the influence of the sabbath on his mind, man every where feels himself accountable to his Maker; and in darkness and solitude, in the secrecy of thought, as well as in the conduct inspected by the public eye, realizes that the all-searching God is a constant witness of whatever he thinks, speaks, or does. From this consideration, more than from the dread of the dungeon and the halter, most men

are inclined to restrain their hands from injustice and violence, from tumult and confusion. In the mean time, the peace and good order of religious assemblies on the sabbath, furnish the highest specimen of this happy conduct that was ever seen in this present world. Fifty-two sabbaths every year is this conduct repeated. Hence it becomes a powerful as well as desirable habit; and clings to him who steadily visits the house of God, through the remainder of every week. In this manner, it is diffused through the life; and influences the thoughts, words, and actions, towards men of every class and character. The magistrate and the subject, the parent and the child, the master and the servant, the friend and the neighbour, are benefited by it alike. All of them acquire more peaceful dispositions; exhibit a more amiable deportment; pursue a more orderly conduct, and fill their respective stations with greater propriety, than either would do under the influence of every other cause, except the immediate agency of God.

It will not be denied, that each of the things which I have specified is an important benefit to mankind; nor that all of them united are of advantage inestimable. But the sabbath has blessings to give, of a still higher nature. Among them this is one of supreme moment; that *the sabbath is the great mean of preserving in the world the knowledge and the worship of the one living and true God.* Wherever the sabbath is not, there is no worship, no religion. Man forgets God; and God forsakes man. The moral world becomes a desert, where life never springs, and beauty never smiles. The beams of the Sun of righteousness never dawn upon the miserable waste; the rains of heaven never descend. Putrid with sin, and shrunk with ignorance, the soul of man loses its rational character: and prostrates itself before devils, men; beasts, and reptiles, insects, stocks, and stones. To these, man offers up his prayers, his praises, and his victims; to these he sacrifices his children; and to these he immolates the purity and honour of his wife. A brutal worshipper of a brutal god, he hopes for protection and blessing from the assumption of every folly, and the perpetration of every crime.

If his mind becomes enlightened by science, and these absurdities, as they sometimes may, become too gross and

too naked to be received by him; he becomes an infidel, a sceptic, an atheist. The absurdity here is not indeed less, but greater. The only material difference is, that it is less palpable, less exposed to vulgar eyes, less susceptible of ridicule. The former is the madness of a blockhead; the latter of a man of learning: that, the folly of the clown; this, of the man of fashion. In this case, the votary wanders through all the labyrinths of subtile disquisition; proves right to be wrong, and wrong to be right; and demonstrates that there is nothing either right or wrong. Freed from these encumbrances, men of this character cast their eyes towards the enjoyments of this world, and covet their neighbour's house, and their neighbour's wife, his man-servant, and his maid-servant; his ox, and his ass; and every thing that is their neighbour's. Nothing now intervenes between themselves and the objects coveted, but the apprehension of resistance, and the dread of punishment. Elevate them to power, and the sabbath is changed into the *decade*, and the house of God into a stable: the Bible is paraded through the streets on an ass, and consumed upon a bonfire; immortal existence is blotted out of the divine kingdom; the Redeemer is postponed to a murderer: and the Creator to a prostitute, styled the goddess of reason. The end of this progress might be easily foreseen. Legalized plunder, legislative butchery, the prostitution of a kingdom, fields drenched in human blood, and cities burnt by human incendiaries, fill up the tremendous measure of iniquity; bewilder the gazing world with astonishment; awaken the shouts of fiends; and cover heaven itself with a robe of sackcloth.

But for the sabbath, this assembly had now been prostrate before the stock of a tree, or sitting round the circle of a paw-waw; or, frantic with rage or frenzy, had been roaming the mountains in honour of Bacchus; or drowning with shouts and screams the cries of a human victim, offered up to appease the wrath of an imaginary deity.

But *thanks be to God for* this *unspeakable gift!* The sabbath, *according to his abundant mercy*, returns at the close of every week, to shine upon us with its peaceful and benevolent beams. At the close of every week, with *a still small voice*, it summons us to the house of God. Here we

meet, and find, and know, and serve, our glorious and blessed Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Here, *on the mercy-seat,* he sits enthroned, to hear our complaints and petitions, to receive our praises, to accept our repentance, and to forgive our sins, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here, he makes known *his* pleasure and *our* duty. Here, he promises to those who obey, divine and eternal rewards; and threatens those who disobey, with terrible and never-ending punishments. Seen every week in these awful and amiable characters, God cannot be unknown nor forgotten. Accordingly, throughout the ages of Christianity, his presence and agency are understood every where, and by every person who frequents the house of God. The little child is as familiarly acquainted with them, as the man of gray hairs; the peasant as the monarch. *All,* in this sense, *know God, from the least to the greatest;* and *there is no occasion for a man to say to his neighbour, Know the Lord.*

Intimately connected with this vast and interesting subject, and in an important sense the effect of the sabbath only, *is the attainment of holiness and salvation.*

Man, an apostate, guilty, and condemned, infinitely needs a renovation of his character, a reversal of his sentence, an escape from his punishment, and a reinstatement in the glorious privileges from which he has fallen. To accomplish these inestimable and benevolent ends, God, according to the language of the text, has *hallowed and blessed the sabbath.* Through every age and through every land, where the sabbath has been kept holy unto the Lord, this blessing has regularly and uninterruptedly descended. There the glad tidings of salvation have been published and received. There men have sought and found JEHOVAH, their God; repented of their sins; believed on the Lord Jesus Christ: renewed their allegiance to their rightful sovereign; obtained the pardon of their sins, and the justification of their souls; triumphed over death and the grave; ascended to heaven; and begun the possession of everlasting joy. *Wherever* even *two or three have met together in the name of Christ, there* he has been *in the midst of them,* and *blessed them* with his peculiar blessing. This holy, heavenly season has regularly opened the correspondence between this miserable world, and the world of life and glory, and pre-

served the connexion between God and men. To it earth owes its chief blessings; and heaven no small part of its inhabitants, and of its unfading joys.

But where mankind have *forsaken the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is,* all these blessings have ceased. *The fruitful land has been converted into marshes, and miry places which could not be healed, and were therefore given to salt.* In such places the world, and sin, and Satan, take entire possession of the heart, and leave no room for God. All the thoughts and desires are the offspring of *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.* Like *Ahab,* men *sell themselves to work wickedness:* like Jeroboam, they *sin,* and *make* all around them *to sin.* There, no prayers ascend to heaven; no voice of mercy is heard from that happy world, inviting sinners to faith and repentance in the Lord Jesus Christ. God is neither sought nor found. None ask for mercy; and none receive it. None knock at the door of life; and to none is it opened. All enter *into the broad and crooked road,* and *go down to the chambers of death;* while God, with an awful voice, proclaims concerning them, *Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.*

Pause now for a moment, and recollect the number, the greatness, the glory, of these ends; and tell me, if the institution which unites and accomplishes them all in perfect harmony, is not supremely wise, and worthy of God. How easily does it accomplish them; how perfectly; how wonderfully! How happy is the frequent, convenient, necessary return of this holy day! After how desirable intervals; with what useful regularity; with what sweet serenity! How necessary is it to the sinner, to call him off from the world, from stupidity, from sottishness! How necessary to awaken his attention to God, to holiness, and to heaven; to engage his thoughts on spiritual and divine objects; to begin his repentance, faith, and love; and to place his feet in *the path which leads to* immortal *life!* How necessary to the saint, to rouse him from sloth; to recall him from sin; to remind him of his duty; to increase his faith and holiness, and to help him forward in his journey towards heaven! How necessary to Adam in his innocence; how infinitely necessary to all his ruined offspring! In a word, how

plainly has the sabbath been *blessed*, as well as *hallowed!* How blessed from the beginning to the present time; blessed in a multitude of particulars; blessed, in every land where it has been known, with the immediate and peculiar favour of God, with the nearest resemblance to the blessings of immortality!

2. *The mind of a good man cannot fail also to be deeply affected with the solemnity of this institution.*

When God ended the glorious work of creation, *he rested the seventh day from all the work which he had made.* The creation was now fresh from the forming hand of JEHOVAH. The great Architect had *builded his stories in the heaven; had numbered the stars, and called them all by their names; had appointed the moon for seasons, and caused the sun to know his going down.* He had filled the world with beauty and fragrance, with glory and grandeur, with life and immortality. In the full view of this transporting, this amazing scene; in the strong apprehension of the infinite perfections which it unfolded; *the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy:* while the Author of all things beheld the works which his hands had made, and pronounced them *very good.* The praise begun by angels, our first parents reiterated on the first morning of their existence; and made their delightful residence vocal with hymns to their Creator. The first employment of Paradise, the first work done by man, was the worship of God. Thus the dawn of human existence was opened by the same divine employment, which will unceasingly occupy the everlasting day of heaven. When the command to *remember this day* was given, there were *in the morning, thunders and lightnings; and a thick cloud* upon Mount Sinai, and *the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke; because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace; and the whole mount quaked greatly.* In the midst of this amazing grandeur, in the midst of these awful terrors, God with his own voice spoke this command, and wrote it with his own finger. With this example, and with these solemnities, was one day in seven consecrated to JEHOVAH.

When the new creation was finished, the creation of holiness in the soul of man, the creation of a church, comprising immense multitudes of immortal minds, as a holy and eternal kingdom unto God; Christ arose from the dead to endless life and glory, *became the first-fruits of them that slept,* and their forerunner into the heavens. On this divine occasion, the same exalted beings, who sang together when the heavens and the earth were made, and proclaimed *glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good-will towards men,* when the Saviour of the world was born, now renewed their songs, and entered with Christ into the highest heavens, with all the pomp and splendour which invested Sinai at the promulgation of the law.

On this day the Spirit of grace and truth descended upon the apostles of our Lord and Saviour; baptized them with fire; endued them with inspiration, the gift of tongues, and the spirit of prophecy; gave them to understand the gospel in its glorious mysteries; and enabled them, with wonderful miracles, to prove its divine origin, and thus to erect the spiritual kingdom of God in the world.

All these examples, the most august, the most amazing, which the universe ever beheld, leave their whole weight, their infinite authority, upon this institution. Every Christian therefore, while he keeps the sabbath holy unto God, ought, in order to quicken himself in his duty, to remember, that on this sacred day God rested; that his Redeemer rested; that the Spirit of grace descended; and that angels repeatedly united together in enraptured praise. Nor ought he, in any wise, to forget, that no institution can plead so many, and so great things, done to solemnize and consecrate it as holy unto God, and as indispensably binding upon man.

3. *We learn, from the observations already made, with what emotions the sabbath ought to be regarded by us.*

We assemble in the house of God, to glorify him in the religious worship which he has appointed; to seek the everlasting life of our own souls; to obtain and increase holiness in our hearts; to remember, admire, and celebrate, the wonderful works of the old and new creations, and the glorious perfections of the Creator and Redeemer. What emotions ought we to feel while engaged in this divine em-

ployment? Such, unquestionably, as angels experienced, when these works were done, and these perfections were displayed.

Particularly, *the sabbath demands of all men profound reverence and solemn awe.* All the things which have been mentioned, are supremely great, sublime, and wonderful. The most awful of all beings is brought near to our hearts, and presents himself before our eyes, in manifestations of a most majestic and astonishing nature. Had we been present at the work of creation, and heard the awful command which brought into being the immense mass of original elements: had we seen the light, at the bidding of the great workman, disclose and involve the formless confusion; the sea and the dry land separate; the grass, the herbs, and the trees, instantaneously arise, and clothe the earth in one universal robe of life and beauty; the sun, the moon, and the stars, lighted up in the heavens; the various animals filling the world with living beings; and man, the lord, the crown, and the glory, of the whole, formed a rational and immortal being, to understand, enjoy, and celebrate, the divine work: could we have failed to experience the most profound awe, amid this complication of infinite wonders, and to glorify the great Author of them with *that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom?*

Had we again been present at the crucifixion of our divine Redeemer, and beheld the earth tremble, the rocks rend, the veil of the temple part asunder, the graves open, the saints arise, and the sun hide his face in darkness; had we accompanied his body to the tomb, and watched the descent of the angel, the convulsions of the second earthquake, the lightnings which streamed from his countenance, and the swooning of the guards who kept the sepulchre; had we seen our Lord resume his life, come forth from the grave to his doubting, trembling disciples; had we seen him rise from the earth, enter the bosom of the cloud of glory, and with a solemn and magnificent progress ascend to the heavens; must not the same awful emotions have been instinctively renewed?

But all these things, this sacred day, this divine festival, places before our eyes. If, at the same time, we farther remember, that we are in the house of God; that hither he

comes to meet us on designs of infinite love; to forgive our sins, to renew, receive, and save, our souls; that we stand before him as sinners, as apostates, condemned, ruined, helpless, and, in ourselves, hopeless also; that we are suppliants for mere mercy, dependant on the obedience of another, and without any righteousness of our own; must we not feel our littleness and our guilt? Must we not, instinctively, lay our hands on our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, and cry, "Unclean?" Can we fail to fear *that glorious and fearful name,* JEHOVAH, *our God?*

This emotion every thing in the Scriptures conspires to improve and strengthen. The law of God, with all its commands, promises, and threatenings, its divine rewards and amazing penalties; the gospel, with its solemn establishments of the law, its remedies for the imperfections of the law as the means of life for sinners, its glorious invitations, supreme allurements, and heavenly promises; conspire with infinite force to persuade us to *fear the Lord our God, and to tremble at his word.* He who is thoughtless and irreverent here, ought to have considered how he would have felt amid the thunders, the lightnings, the earthquake, the sound of the trumpet, and the flame of devouring fire, from which the Creator said, *Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy.* To this man, more than to almost any other sinner, is addressed that humbling rebuke, *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider.*

At the same time, *the sabbath is to be regarded with peculiar joy.*

All things relating to the sabbath, are not only solemn but joyful things. At the creation, a new universe started up into being; and life, reason, virtue, and immortality, were given to an endless multitude of creatures. At the new creation, an endless multitude of perishing sinners, destined to eternal sin and eternal woe, were recalled from the melancholy regions of death and depravity, to immortal holiness, life, and glory. On these stupendous occasions *all the sons of God shouted for joy.* We are still more interested in the last of them than they could be; for we are the miserable beings who are redeemed and saved. On the sabbath, the great body of the church has been

brought into the kingdom of grace, and prepared for the kingdom of glory. On the first sabbath, upon which began the great work of erecting the kingdom of Christ in the world by the apostles, *three thousand souls were added unto the Lord.* On the first sabbath, the apostles *were baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire,* and divinely empowered to spread salvation through the world. On the sabbath, the souls of men have ever since been flocking into the kingdom of Christ, and taking possession of immortality. The sabbath has been the great means of preserving that kingdom. To the sabbath it is owing, that the glad tidings of salvation are now heard in this desolate world. To the sabbath it is owing, that in this land, where, ever since the deluge, nothing was heard but the howlings of wild beasts, the war-screams of savages, or the groans of torture and death, now through a thousand churches is weekly resounded the music of heaven, and the proclamation of life eternal to mankind. The sabbath is appropriately *the accepted time;* it is eminently *the day of salvation.* To the sabbath will our salvation be owed; if we attain salvation. On the sabbath, all Christian assemblies meet to offer up their humble prayers; to send up their hymns of praise to their *Father who is in heaven;* to teach and receive *the words of eternal life;* to be *baptized into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;* and to receive the body and blood of their crucified Redeemer. On the sabbath, the Christian world bears, in this manner, no unhappy resemblance of heaven; and a little part of the melancholy hours of time, becomes a fair image of the pure and never-ending sabbath beyond the grave.

With these delightful things in view, can we fail to unite with *the church of the first-born,* and *the innumerable company of angels,* and repeat and respond their divine exultation? Shall not our songs bear an humble unison with theirs? Shall not the joy which they feel on the great business of this day, the repentance and return of sinners, find a welcome admission to our hearts? Shall we not *rejoice in him that made us?* shall not *the children of Zion be joyful in their King?*

God on this day rejoiced over the creation which his hands had made. Angels rejoiced in the wonders of the

work, and in the divine workman. Christ rejoiced over the church, which he redeemed with his own blood. Heaven has rejoiced at every return of this delightful season; and renewed its transports over all the sons of Adam, whom this day has with divine efficacy raised from death to life. *The Lord God is* now our *Sun, and* our *Shield.* Now *he gives grace and glory.* This day *he withholds no good thing from them that walk uprightly.* Let mortals behold these things with wonder and gratulation; and anticipate the pure and permanent transports of the everlasting sabbath in the heavens.

Nor is this holy day *to be less regarded with gratitude.*

All the benevolent things which God has done for us, this day brings before our eyes. Our being, our daily blessings, our redemption, our salvation, the resumed character of holiness, and the title to endless life, the final escape from sin and misery, this heavenly season proclaims with an unceasing voice. At this season, God comes down to dwell among men, divested, with respect to all who are willing to receive him, of the awful frowns of an offended judge, clothed with the smiles of an eternal benefactor, and adorned with the endearing titles of the Father, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier, of man. Here the calls to gratitude are all united. The blessings of earth and heaven, of time and eternity, here invite us to love and praise the Author of all our mercies. Can we fail to *render to him according to his benefits?* Can we fail this day to ascribe *blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.*

4. *How ought the Christian church to bless God for this institution!*

To this institution we owe far the greater part of the spiritual blessings which we enjoy; and, in a high sense, we owe them all. But for this day we should neither have sought nor secured eternal life; for where no sabbath is, there is no religion. But for this day, earthly things would have engrossed all our thoughts. Honour, wealth, and pleasure, are the real syrens, which charm mankind to shipwreck and death. To their songs the ear of man is by nature attuned, and the heart beats in regular response. But for this day, the world, as a canker, would rust, cor-

rupt, and consume, all the disposition to piety, and all the hopes of heaven. The soul would be benumbed. Religion would die. God would be forgotten. The death of Christ would be vain. Mankind would cease to be saved: and heaven would fail of her destined inhabitants. How desolate the prospect! How strongly would this world resemble the regions of final despair; where no sabbath dawns; where no prayers nor praises ascend; no sermons proclaim pardon and peace to sinners; the voice of mercy never sounds; and the smiles of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love, never illumine the dreary valley of the shadow of death!

All things pertaining to salvation, are social things; things of general participation and powerful sympathy. They exist chiefly in multitudes. Without the sabbath, there is no reason to believe that they could exist at all. Not where *one* is employed in religious worship merely nor principally; but where *two or three are met together in the name of Christ;* is his presence promised. Not in the closet, the recess, or the solitude, but *on Zion, whither the tribes go up, has the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.*

5. *What an illustrious type is the sabbath, of the everlasting rest enjoyed by the children of God!*

The sabbath is a rest from sin, business, and pleasure: a day in which God is worshipped, divine knowledge improved, and holiness attained and increased; a day, in which saints delightfully commune, and joyfully celebrate the wonders of creation, and the sublimer wonders of redemption. On the sabbath, God is peculiarly present, reconciled, forgiving, and sanctifying; and the Spirit of truth eminently communicates comfortable evidence of divine love, whispers peace, and inspires joy. The sabbath is therefore the day of hope and consolation, of enjoyment and triumph; the foretaste of heaven; the entrance to the glorious assembly of the blessed.

The future rest of the children of God is divinely formed of these delightful ingredients. Here eternal peace begins its undisturbed reign over all the great kingdom of Jehovah. Here immortal minds are consummated in that holiness which is *the image of the heavenly Adam.* Here those minds, in the exercise of that holiness which exalted friend-

ship, and pure unbosomed intercourse, commence their everlasting joy. Here *God is all in all.* Here, he unveils his face, and discloses the smiles of infinite love to the assembly of the first-born. And here *the Lamb, the glory of God,* and *the light* of heaven, illumines all their thoughts, quickens all their affections, *feeds them with living bread, leads them to fountains of living waters,* and *awakens into transport their hymns of never-ending praise.*

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## SERMON CX.

### FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

### DUTY OF CHILDREN.

*Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* —EXOD. XX. 12.

THE *four first commands* of the decalogue enjoin those which are called *the duties of piety.* These were written on the first table; and were summed up by Moses, and by Christ, in this general one; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.* We are now entering upon the consideration of the *six last;* directing what are commonly called *the duties of morality,* or *our duties towards mankind.* These were written upon the second table, and are summed up by Moses, by Christ, and by St. Paul, in *the second great command,* styled by St. James the *royal law; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* The first of these commands is the text. As a general preface to the observations which I propose to make successively on these commands, it will be proper to remark, that they are universally to be extended according to the interpretation given by our Saviour of *the sixth* and *seventh* in his sermon on the Mount. In commenting on *the former of these,* Christ teaches us,

that to *be angry with our brother without a cause, to say unto him, Raca,* or *Thou fool,* is to be guilty of a breach of this command. In commenting on *the seventh,* he declares, that *whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, the same hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* Generally, *all these precepts are to be considered as directing our duty, in all respects, which by inference or analogy can be fairly arranged under them.* Accordingly (to give an example), I shall consider this command as regulating the duties reciprocally owed by parents and children, magistrates and subjects, and by other classes of mankind, in their several relations. That I am warranted in this mode of explaining these precepts is, I think, evident from the conduct of our Saviour. I shall only add, that in this manner they have been generally understood by divines, and extensively declared in catechisms: for example, in that of the Westminster assembly, that of Dr. Novell, and that of king Edward. In the examination of the subjects involved in this command, I shall begin with that which is directly expressed—THE DUTY OF CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS.

The word *honour,* by which this duty is here enjoined, is chosen with supreme felicity; as being sufficiently comprehensive, and sufficiently definite, to express, with as much exactness as can easily be compassed, all the several branches of duty which parents can equitably demand of their children. Particularly, it is explained by Christ commenting, Matt. xv. 3, on the vile fetch by which the Pharisees released their disciples from obedience to this precept, to involve the obligation of children *to support their parents in their indigence and old age.* It is also explained by St. Paul, as enjoining *the universal obedience of children.* In its own primary sense also, it denotes all *the affection and veneration which children owe to their parents,* and which constitute so extensive and important a part of filial piety.

Filial duties are so numerous, that many volumes might be written on this subject only, without particularizing them all. Within the limits prescribed to these discourses, it is obvious nothing more can be done, than to exhibit briefly the prominent things included in this and the following

precepts. Nothing more therefore will be attempted. According to this plan, filial duty may be advantageously comprised under the following heads.

1. *Children are bound to regard their parents with respect and reverence at all times.*

Particularly, these exercises of filial piety are,

1. *To exist in the thoughts.*

*Keep thy heart,* said David to Solomon, *with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.* All good proceeds from this source, as well as all evil. In vain will children labour to perform their duty in any other manner, if they neglect it in this. Here, the whole course of filial piety begins; and, if not commenced here, will never be pursued with any success. Thoughts are the soul, the living principle, of all duty. Every thing else is a lifeless body without a soul, a shadow without a substance.

Every child is bound to entertain the most respectful and reverential *thoughts* concerning his parents, and concerning the parental character. He is to remember and regard his parents, as standing in the most venerable, and the most endearing, of all earthly relations to him; as those to whom, under God, he owes his being, and the great mass of his blessings. He is to regard them as the persons to whose kindness, care, and government, he has been committed by God himself. He is to consider them as the best of all friends; the most affectionate, the most faithful, the most confidential, the most persevering, the most watchful, the most unwearied.

*His affections towards them* ought ever to be reverential, grateful, warm, and full of kindness. Whatever his plans or purposes are, he ought invariably to feel, that they will be most safely, and in every case of any importance should be regularly, intrusted to them for advice and direction. Parents, unless when under the immediate influence of some strong passion or prejudice, very rarely oppose, of design, the real interests of their children. Almost all the counsels, injunctions, and reproofs, which they give, and which the children at times consider as unkind, are given, intentionally at least, for their good; and ought to be regarded only in this manner. Children are bound to fix in their minds an

habitual sense of the superior station and wisdom of their parents, and of their own inferiority in all these respects. Their thoughts and affections towards them ought universally to spring from this sense of their superiority: a superiority originated by the creating hand of God, and consummated by his most holy law. To this sense ought all their views to be conformed. The beginnings of irreverence, the first tendencies towards disadvantageous, light, disrespectful apprehensions concerning them, they are bound to crush in the bud, and to cultivate with watchful care every affectionate and respectful emotion.

By the providence of God it is frequently brought to pass, that parents are in humble life; uneducated; ignorant; little regarded by the world; irreligious; not unfrequently openly vicious, and sometimes plainly scandalous. Here filial piety, it must be acknowledged, becomes a harder task; and, especially in the last-mentioned cases, is attended with serious difficulty in its various duties. Children are, however, to remember, that God has given even the children of such parents no dispensation with respect to their filial duties. The command in the text is addressed to *them* no less absolutely than to *other children*. As their case is more difficult, they are required to make more careful and vigorous exertions; to forget the personal character, and to remember only the parental. The children may be better educated; may know more; may have better dispositions; and may sustain better characters. Let them remember, that to God in the first place, and ordinarily to these very parents in the second, they owe these blessings: and let them shew their gratitude, their superior understanding, to the eye of him from whom they derive their all; by cultivating the sentiments which I have urged, and by resisting effectually those which I have condemned. He who gave them parents, he who made them children, he who said to them, *Honour thy father and thy mother*, has an indisputable right to require this conduct at their hands. If the duty is difficult, it is proportionally excellent, honourable, and lovely.

2. *The same exercises of filial piety are to be manifested in the words of children.*

The words uttered by children, which respect their pa-

rents in any manner, are to correspond with the thoughts which have been here recommended, and if effectual care is taken to make the thoughts right, the words will be right of course.

When children speak to their parents, they are required ever to speak modestly, submissively, and respectfully. Whatever opinions children may entertain which may differ from those of their parents in any case, it is their duty to propose with humility, meekness, and respect. They are to address them, not as disputants; not as equals; but as children; as modest inferiors. Both their words, and their manner of uttering them, should bear unequivocal evidence, that they are conscious of this character.

When children speak of their parents to others, they are bound to speak with the most exact caution, and with similar respect; and never to say any thing concerning them which they would be unwilling to say to them when present. It is their duty invariably to endeavour, so far as truth and propriety will admit, to render the character of their parents respectable in the eyes of others. The faults of their parents it is their duty to conceal; their excellencies always readily to admit; and to experience and manifest their satisfaction when others admit them. They are not indeed to boast of the good qualities of their parents; as they are not to boast of any thing else; but with modesty and propriety to welcome them when mentioned by others; and, when they have a becoming occasion, to speak of them themselves.

Sometimes children are compelled to the mortification of hearing their parents ill spoken of by others. Their duty then requires them, whenever they can do it with success, to repel the ungenerous attack, and to defend the character of their parents. If this is not in their power, they are bound to manifest their indignation and disgust by such declarations as the nature of the case demands; and at least to prevent themselves from the pain and mischief produced by such conversation, by withdrawing finally from persons of this unreasonable and abusive character.

3. *The same spirit ought to appear in all the deportment of children.*

The deportment of children, when their parents are pre-

sent, ought to exhibit every mark of respect. The honour required in the text ought, in the literal sense, to be here invariably rendered, without qualification, without reserve, without reluctance. However humble the station, the circumstances, the education, or the manners, of parents may be; the child, instead of discovering that he is ashamed of them, or of assuming to himself airs of importance, is bound cheerfully to acknowledge their proper superiority; to exhibit towards them a respectful deference; and always to prevent even a remote suspicion, that he is reluctant to give them their proper place.

II. *Children are bound to obey the commands of their parents.*

That it is the province of parents to govern, and that of children to obey, will not be questioned. Nor will it be doubted, that children are equally bound to abstain from things prohibited by their parents, as to perform those which they enjoin. Of this obedience it may be observed,

1. *That it ought to be uniform and faithful.*

*Children,* says St. Paul, *obey your parents in all things; for this is right, and well-pleasing to the Lord.* To the universality of this precept there is but one exception; and that is, when the injunction is contrary to the law of God. The obedience of little children ought undoubtedly to be implicit. They are plainly incapable of directing their own conduct; and parents are appointed by God himself to direct it. While it is the duty of the parent to instruct his child in the nature of moral conduct, and the reasonableness and rectitude of hisown commands, as fast as the understanding of the child will permit; and to give no commands which are not agreeable to the will of God: it is undoubtedly the duty of the child to obey every parental precept, except such as are of this nature. To this rule I know of no exception.

Filial obedience is commonly rendered without much difficulty, when parents are present. Every child should remember, that his obligations to obedience are not lessened by their absence; that God is then present; that he has required them not to obey with eye-service; and that he records all their conduct in the book of his remembrance.

They are also ever to keep in mind, that they are required to obey *difficult* commands, as well as those which are *easy;* those which require much self-denial, labour, and trouble, as well as those which are attended only with pleasure; those in which their disobedience will never be detected, as well as those in which it will certainly be known. No other obedience deserves the name of faithful.

2. *Filial obedience ought to be ready and cheerful.*

This is the only obedience which commends itself to the common sense of mankind, or which is of any value in the sight of God. In this obedience the heart is concerned, and the child active. Every thing else which goes under this name is constrained; hypocritical; a cheat; a sin. No other is regarded in the Scriptures. To sustain this character, the obedience of children should be rendered without opposition, and without delay. A great part of the value of filial obedience arises from the manner in which it is rendered. God himself *loves the cheerful giver.* Mankind have exactly the same views of this subject; and universally consider that which is done grudgingly, as little better, and often worse, than if it had not been done at all.

III. *Children are bound to do do whatever will reasonably contribute to the happiness of their parents, whether commanded or not.*

The modes in which this part of filial duty is to be rendered, are so numerous that it is impossible to recite them. It will be sufficient to observe, at the present time, that no filial piety is more lovely, or more accordant with the text, than that which attentively prevents the wants, the commands, and the wishes, of parents; which adds to their comforts and lessens their troubles, in a thousand indescribable ways, readily offering themselves to the mind of a dutiful child.

One of the happiest modes of obeying the text is found in *the discreet, amiable, and virtuous behaviour of children.* Parents are delightfully honoured, when their children exhibit excellent conduct before mankind; and thus acquire the approbation and good-will of those around them. In

this case they render a very pleasing and very honourable tribute to the parental wisdom, care, and faithfulness, employed in their education; and shew, in the strongest manner, that the precepts by which they have been trained up, have been received by them with such reverence and piety, as to have a commanding influence upon their lives. In this manner children become *the glory of* their *parents*, and *the crown of gray hairs.*

*The duties of children obviously change with the change of age and circumstances. When they are very young,* their obedience, as I remarked, must be implicit. They are to obey without investigation, inquiry, or doubt; for this plain reason, that they are incapable altogether of judging for themselves. But they are to be taught to judge as early as their years and understanding will permit. This is indispensable; because by learning habitually the reasons on which their parents' commands are founded, they will soon learn to think that they are all reasonable; and obey them with more readiness and exactness on this account; and because many cases will occur, in which their parents cannot be present, and in which therefore they must judge for themselves. This it is plain they cannot do, unless they are taught. *As they advance in years and understanding,* the nature of their obedience will vary; chiefly from this circumstance, that they understand their duty, and the reasons on which it is founded; and are therefore required to perform it from a due regard to its nature and importance, to the law of God which established it, and to the character and kindness of their parents which demand it from their reverence and their gratitude. In other respects their obedience is founded on the same principles during the whole period of their nonage.

Nor do the same rules apply to them in a very different manner, *after they have arrived at adult years;* so long as they continue in their father's house, and are members of his family. In this situation however, the circumstances of both parents and children vary so much, that the relations and duties of both are usually modified by some plan or compact between them, sufficiently understood to serve as a rule by which the conduct of the child is to be directed. I shall therefore think it necessary only to observe, that

when children have faithfully performed their duty to this period, they rarely fail of performing it afterward.

*When children have left their father's house, their circumstances* become more materially changed, and with them, in several respects, their duties. They then have separate interests and business of their own; and usually families also. When God instituted marriage, he authorized children to leave the house and government of their parents. *For this cause,* said the Creator, *shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife.* Matthew xix. 4, 5. In this situation then, children become parents, heads of families, invested with all the authority, possessed of all the rights, and subjected to all the duties, pertaining to their own parents. It is impossible, that in these circumstances they should fulfil their former duties, as children under the government of their parents, unless they neglect those which are indispensable in their present situation. From many of these duties therefore they are released.

Still; as they are more indebted to their parents than to any other human beings, and incomparably more indebted, at least in ordinary cases; their remaining duties to their parents are numerous and important. In this situation, more frequently than any other, they are required to contribute to the maintenance of their parents. This is made by our Saviour to be so important a branch of the command in our text, that he declares the Pharisees, who by a fraudulent comment on this precept had released men from the duty in question, to have *made* this *command of God of none effect by their tradition.* In this period also they are bound, as much as may be, to nurse and soothe their parents in pain and sickness; to bear patiently and kindly their infirmities of body and mind; to alleviate their distresses; to give them the cheering influence of their company and conversation; and in these and various other ways to serene and brighten the evening, but too frequently a melancholy one, of old age.

*The children of sinful parents* have always a difficult task to perform. To a pious child, a parent visibly going down in the broad and crooked road that leads to destruction, is a sight beyond measure distressing. That a child, thus situated, is bound in every discreet and efficacious

manner to prevent, as far as may be, the awful catastrophe, will not be questioned, unless by an atheist. What is to be done in so dreadful a case, it will be impossible to prescribe here, unless in very general terms. Every child will know indeed, without information, that his prayers are to be offered up for his parent, and his own pious example presented to him, without ceasing. Every child also knows that all his own measures, whatever they may be in other respects, are to be obedient, modest, and reverential. No other measures can, in these circumstances, be hopefully followed by any good consequences. Still they may be sufficiently plain and unequivocal as to their meaning.

Among the efforts made by such a child, in addition to his own discreet personal conduct and conversation, few seem better fitted to answer the end in view, than inducing persons, possessed of known wisdom and piety, especially those of an engaging deportment, frequently to visit the parent, and persuading him also often to visit them; placing books of a religious nature, written in a pleasing and interesting manner, within his reach; alluring him regularly to the house of God, and to private religious assemblies; and introducing, without any apparent design, religious topics, especially those which are peculiarly interesting as often as may be, with propriety. In my own view, the child is also bound, modestly, submissively, and discreetly, to remonstrate against the visible wickedness of the parent. I can see no reason which will justify a child in the omission of this duty; although I am not unaware of the peculiar difficulties which attend it, nor unapprized of the peculiar delicacy and prudence which it demands. Reproof, even from equals or superiors, requires more skill and care, in order to render it successful, than fall to the lot of most men. In a child to a parent, it must be singularly embarrassing.

A less delicate task, yet still attended with many difficulties, lies in avoiding the influence naturally presented, and often but too efficaciously, by the sentiments, precepts, and examples, of evil parents. The parental character is so venerable, so authoritative, so endearing, and so persuasive, that the child who escapes its malignant influence, when employed to encourage sin, may well be considered

as eminently the object of the divine favour. Still it is possible; and has existed in multiplied instances. Abijah escaped even in the house of Jeroboam; Hezekiah in that of Ahaz; and Josiah in that of Amon. Thus also has the fact often been in all succeeding ages of time. Children therefore, instead of despairing, should gird themselves with watchfulness and resolution suited to their circumstances; should continually and fervently beseech God to guard by his good Spirit from the dangers in which they stand; should watch their own conduct with peculiar anxiety; should seek for wisdom and direction from religious books, especially from the Scriptures; and should ask advice, countenance, and assistance, from those among their friends who are persons of piety. The company of such persons counteracts, in a manner invaluable, the influence of evil example. "*He that walketh with wise men,* says *God, shall be wise.*

Having thus given a summary account of the duties of children, I shall now proceed to mention several reasons to enforce them.

1. *Every considerate child will feel his filial duty strongly urged by the excellence of this conduct, and the odiousness of filial impiety.*

This is one of the few moral subjects concerning which all men are agreed. The writers of all ages and of all countries, have taught us with a single voice, that to the common eye of mankind no object is more amiable or more delightful, than a dutiful and virtuous child. This charming object commends itself at first view to the natural feelings, the judgment, and the conscience, of all men. It commends itself at once, without deliberation, and without doubt. It has commended itself to persons of every character, in every age, and in every country. It is esteemed: it is loved. The affection which it excites, and the reputation which it produces, are sincere, solid, and permanent. Nothing more certainly generates esteem: nothing more uniformly creates friends. It is a kind of glory, surrounding the child wherever he goes, seen, felt, and acknowledged, by all men, and conferring a distinction otherwise unattainable. All persons presage well of such a child: and he is expected

of course to fill every station to which his talents are suited with propriety and honour.

An undutiful child, on the contrary, brands his own character with odiousness and infamy. No person sees him or thinks of him without pain and disgust. No parent is willing, that his own children should become his companions. The vilest persons regard him with contempt and abhorrence; the best, with pity and indignation. A parent on his death-bed hardly knows how to ask a blessing for him: and those who survive are still more unable to believe it will descend upon his head.

2. *Considerate children will find another powerful reason for filial duty in the pleasure which it gives their parents.*

Nothing which takes place in human life creates a higher, more genuine, or more unmingled pleasure, in the minds of parents, than the pious and dutiful conduct of their children. It is indeed impossible, that a child should form adequate conceptions of the delight which such conduct awakens in the parental heart. Experience only can completely teach the nature of this emotion. Still children cannot but know, that their parents in this manner find exquisite enjoyment; nor can they be ignorant, that to produce it is one of their own chief blessings, as well as one of their indispensable duties. Filial piety is a continual feast; an ample reward for every parental care, toil, watching, anxiety, and prayer. It sweetens all the bitterness of human life: and adds an exquisite relish to every comfort. The burdens of life it makes light and easy: and is the most supporting stay on this side of heaven to the weary steps of declining age.

An undutiful child, on the other hand, is *a broken reed, on which if a man lean, it shall thrust through his hand, and pierce him. A foolish son is a heaviness* alike *to his* father and *his mother;* a spot on their character; a trial of their patience; a blast upon their hopes; a nuisance to their family; and a thorn in their hearts.

3. *The demands of gratitude present a combination of such reasons to every such child, for the same conduct.*

Parental love is unrivalled by any affection of the human breast in its strength, its tenderness, its patience, its permanency, and its cheerful self-denial. The labours

which it undergoes, and the willingness with which it undergoes them, are unexampled in the concerns of man. No other affection toils with the same readiness and patience, or voluntarily encounters the same watchings, cares, pains, and anxieties. None prompts so many prayers; none awakens so many tears. Most of human life, after we arrive at adult age, is spent in providing for the wants, alleviating the sufferings, removing the diseases, furnishing the education, guarding the conduct, securing the safety, accomplishing the settlement, and promoting the salvation, of children. More is done by parents, and daily done, than children can ever realize, until they are called to do the same things for their own offspring. All at the same time are efforts of tenderness merely. These efforts are almost without number; this tenderness almost without degree. What child, who remembers that he is indebted to his parents for his being, and under God for almost every blessing which he enjoys, for almost all that he is, and for almost all that he has, can fail to feel and to acknowledge, that the utmost which he can do in the proper course of filial piety, is an imperfect requital for such affections and such blessings as these? That there are such *beings*, I am reluctantly compelled to confess. *Children* they ought not to be called. They are unworthy of the name. They are monstrous productions, out of the course of nature; and, like all such productions, fill the mind with loathing and horror. Let such children remember, that they are objects of still more abhorrence to God than to men. Let them remember, that this great and awful Being, who has styled himself the Father of mankind, and who has imaged his own tenderness for his creatures by that of a father to his children, will at the final day vindicate the parental rights in a terrible manner, by inflicting the severest punishment on undutiful children.

4. *The great advantages of filial piety present strong reasons for the practice of it to children of every character.*

Of the text St. Paul observes, when enjoining the duties of it upon the children of the Ephesian Christians, that *it is the first commandment with promise*. Accordingly he urges their obedience to it upon the very ground of this promise, that *their days also might be long upon the land which the Lord their God had given them*. This promise therefore, to

such an extent that an apostle thought proper to urge it upon the Ephesian Christians, extends to the Gentiles. The promises to the Jews, in most instances, announced temporal blessings only. Those which are made to Christians, chiefly convey spiritual blessings. But that which is contained in the text, conveys temporal blessings also. In conversing with the plain people of this country, distinguished for their good sense and careful observation of facts, I have found them, to a great extent, firmly persuaded of the verification of this promise in our own days; and ready to produce a variety of proofs from cases in which they have seen the blessing realized. Their opinion on this subject is mine; and with their experience my own has coincided.

Indeed, no small measure of prosperity seems ordinarily *interwoven* with a course of filial piety. The comfort which it ensures to parents, the harmony which it produces in the family, the peace which it yields to the conscience, are all essential ingredients of happiness. To these it adds the approbation of every beholder, the possession of a fair and lasting reputation; the confidence and good-will of every worthy man; and of consequence an opportunity of easily gaining those useful employments which worthy men have to give. Beyond this it naturally associates with itself that temperance, moderation, and sobriety, which furnish a solid foundation for health and long life. In my own apprehensions however, these are not *all* its blessings. I do not believe that miracles are wrought for its reward. Neither will I say, that purer gales breathe, to preserve its health; nor that softer suns arise, or more timely rains descend, to mature its harvests; nor that more propitious winds blow, to waft its ships home in safety. But I will say, that on the tide of providence multiplied blessings are borne into its possession, at seasons when they are unexpected in ways unforeseen, and by means unprovided by its own forecast, which are often of high importance; which altogether constitute a rich proportion of prosperity; and which usually are not found by persons of the contrary character.

At the same time, those who act well as children, almost of course act well as men and women; and thus have taken,

without design, the scion of happiness from the parental stock, and grafted it upon other stems, which bear fruit abundantly to themselves. Here, in the language of Dr. Watts,

> "It revives, and bears
> A train of blessings for their heirs."

It is also never to be forgotten, that filial piety, if derived from an evangelical source, is entitled to the peculiar favour of God in the present world, and to the everlasting blessings of the world to come.

5. *The declarations of God concerning this important subject, furnish reasons at once alluring and awful for the exercise of filial piety.*

The text is an illustrious example of this nature of the most persuasive kind. Deut. xxi. 18, gives us a terrible one concerning the stubborn and rebellious son. *The eye,* says Agur, *that mocketh at his father, and refuseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.*

One of the most interesting accounts of this subject to be found in the Scriptures, as it has struck my mind, is exhibited in the thirty-fifth chapter of Jeremiah. Jonadab, the son of Rechab, commanded his children and their posterity *neither to drink wine, nor to build houses, nor to sow seed, nor to plant vineyards, but to dwell in tents from generation to generation.* The Rechabites obeyed his voice; and, at the time of Jeremiah, had, for three hundred years, lived in the manner which their ancestor enjoined. As a reward of their filial obedience, the prophet Jeremiah was sent unto the Rechabites with this remarkable message. *Thus saith* JEHOVAH *of Hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he hath commanded you; therefore thus saith* JEHOVAH *of Hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.*

6. *The example of Christ is a reason of the highest import to compel the exercise of filial piety.*

This wonderful person, notwithstanding his great and glorious character and sublime destination, was the fairest

specimen of obedience to parents ever seen in the present world. Let children remember, that *if they have not the spirit of Christ, they are none of his.* He was subject to his parents, as a child of their family, until he was thirty years of age; and forgot not, when he hung on the cross, to provide an effectual support and protection for his mother. Let all children remember when they are weary of labour ing for *their* parents, that Christ laboured for *his;* when they are impatient of their commands, that Christ cheerfully obeyed; when they are reluctant to provide for their parents, that Christ forgot himself, and provided for his mother, amid the agonies of crucifixion. The affectionate language of this divine example to every child is, *Go thou, and do likewise.*

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# SERMON CXI.

## FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

### DUTY OF PARENTS.

*Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.*—PROV. XXII. 6.

IN the preceding discourse I gave a brief account of the *duties of children.* I shall now proceed to consider the *duties of parents.* This also I must consider in a very summary manner, notwithstanding the copiousness and importance of the subject.

In this passage of Scripture, parents are directed to *train up their children in the way in which they should go:* and, to encourage them to this duty, a promise is given, that their children, if trained in this way, *will not depart from it.* The word *train* originally denotes, *to draw along by a regular and steady course of exertions;* and is hence very naturally used to signify *drawing from one action to another, by persuasions, promises, and other efforts, continually*

*repeated.* In a loose and general sense therefore, it may easily include all the duties of parents to their children.

The way in which a child should go, is undoubtedly the way in which it is best for him to go, with respect both to his temporal and eternal well-being.

These duties are customarily and justly distributed under *three heads;*

*The maintenance;*

*The education;* and,

*The settlement; of children.*

*The maintenance of children* must unquestionably be such as the circumstances of the parents will admit, consistently with the dictates of prudence; and such as will secure comfort to their children. Their food and raiment, their employments and gratifications, ought to be all such, as to promote their health. They are carefully to be nursed in sickness, and guarded from danger. Their enjoyments of every kind ought invariably to be innocent; reasonable in their number and degree; evident testimonies of parental wisdom, as well as of parental affection; such as shall prevent them from suffering unnecessary mortification; and such as shall not flatter pride, foster avarice, or encourage sloth or sensuality. They ought also to be such, as to place them upon the same level with the children of other discreet parents in similar circumstances.

*The education of children* involves their *instruction* and *government.*

*The instruction of children* includes,

*The things which they are to be taught;* and,

*The manner of teaching them.*

*The things which children are to be taught,* may be distributed under the two heads of *natural knowledge* and *moral knowledge.*

*Natural knowledge* includes,

1. *Their learning.*

By this I intend, *every thing which they are to gain from books; whether it be learning appropriately so called,* or *the knowledge of arts and sciences.* Of this subject I observe generally, that, like the maintenance of children, it must comport with the circumstances of the parents. It ought also to be suited to the character, talents, and des-

tination, of the child. But an acquaintance with reading, writing, and arithmetic, is indispensably necessary to every child. It is indispensable, that every child should read the Scriptures; highly important, that he should read other religious books; and very useful, that he should enlarge his mind by such diversified knowledge, as may render him beneficial to himself and to mankind.

2. *Natural knowledge includes also, an acquaintance with at least some one kind of useful business.*

Ordinarily, this acquaintance can be gained only in *the practical manner;* that is, by placing the child, at an early period of life, in the business which is to be learned. After he has been instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic, which are indispensable to the advantageous prosecution of every kind of business, he should be required *to do the very business in which he is to be educated.*

There is no greater mistake on the part of rich parents, than their neglect of educating their children to the thorough knowledge of some useful business. It is often observed, and generally felt, that such an education is unnecessary, because their children are to inherit fortunes. The children also feel, and are taught by their parents to feel, that such an education is utterly unnecessary for themselves. Both, at the same time, are but too apt to consider active employments, and even the knowledge necessary to direct them, as humiliating and disgraceful to the children. These are very great mistakes; the dictates of pride and vanity, and not of good sense. Were nothing but the present prosperity of children to be regarded; they ought invariably to be educated in the knowledge of useful business. Almost all the wealth in this country is in the hands of those who have acquired it by their own industry: and almost all those who inherit fortunes, dissipate them in early life; and spend their remaining days in poverty and humiliation. Ignorance of business; and its consequences, idleness and profusion; will easily, and in a short time, scatter any estate. A fortune is a pond, the waters of which will soon run out: well-directed industry is a spring, whose streams are perennial.

Besides, the man, who pursues no useful business, is without significance, and without reputation. The sound common sense of mankind will never annex character to

useless life. He who merely hangs as a burden on the shoulders of his fellow-men; who adds nothing to the common stock of comfort, and merely spends his time in devouring it; will invariably, as well as justly, be accounted a public nuisance.

Beyond all this, every parent is bound, by his duty to God and his children, to educate them to useful business, in order to enable them to perform their own duty; to become blessings both to themselves and mankind; and to possess the rational enjoyments furnished by a lifeof industrious activity; in their very nature incomprehensibly superior to sloth and profusion.

*Moral knowledge is all included, as well as enjoined, in the Scriptures.* It is also, in its own nature, either directly or indirectly, all practical.

Knowledge of this kind is naturally distributed under the following heads:

1. *Piety.*

To this head belongs *reverence to God.* Every child should be taught, from the beginning, to fear that great and glorious Being, to whom he owes his existence, his blessings, and his hopes. This knowledge is indispensable to all rectitude of character. As I have considered the general nature of this subject in a former discourse; I shall only observe here, that nothing will, in an equal degree, secure a child from sin; strengthen him against the force of temptation; or fix his feet immoveably in the path of righteousness.

Inseparably connected with this subject is *a sense of accountableness.* Every child should know, as soon as he is capable of knowing, that he is a moral being in a state of probation for his conduct, in which he will be hereafter judged and rewarded; that God is an eyewitness to all his secret and open conduct alike; and that every thing, which he speaks, thinks, or does, will be the foundation of his final reward. Proper impressions of these two great subjects, habitually made in the early periods of childhood, will influence the life more than any other considerations; will revive, after they have been long thought to have been forgotten; and will produce happy effects, when all other causes have lost their power.

With the same care *should children be accustomed to read the Scriptures, whenever they have become able to read.* Here they will find these great subjects, as well as all others of a similar nature, placed in the strongest light, and taught in the most perfect manner: a manner suited to every mind capable of understanding such subjects at all. Here particularly facts and characters of a moral nature are exhibited with a felicity altogether unrivalled. With both of these, children are delighted; and fasten on both with that peculiar earnestness which prevents them from being ever obliterated. As they are presented in the Scriptures, they are eminently entertaining to children; and, to a great extent, are set in so obvious a light, as to be easily understood even by very young minds.

*Every child should be taught* also, *that he is a sinner; and, as such, exposed to the anger of God.* The efficacy of this instruction upon the early mind, is of the most desirable nature. Nothing more successfully checks the growth of pride; the most universal, the most pleasing, the most operative, and the most mischievous, of all the human passions. Without this instruction also, all other religious teaching will be in vain. He who is not conscious that he is a sinner, will never take a single step towards salvation. Happily, children very easily receive and admit this instruction. In the earlier periods of life, the conscience is so far unbiassed, and possesses so great power, as to induce the heart, however reluctant in itself, regularly to acknowledge the truth of this important doctrine.

*As soon as it is practicable, every child should be conducted to the knowledge of the Saviour.* On the infinite importance of this indispensable knowledge I need not here dwell. Suffice it to observe, that children will sooner imbibe this knowledge, than parents are usually aware; and that childhood is often the only importunity for obtaining it which they ever enjoy.

Finally, *children should be carefully instructed in all the external duties of piety.* They should be effectually, as well as unceasingly, taught to mention the name of God, and every thing obviously related to this awful Being, with profound reverence only; to observe the sabbath, from the beginning to the end, with religious exactness; to be pre-

sent punctiliously at the public worship of God, and to attend to all the ordinances of it with reverence and care; to attend in the same manner upon family worship; and in the same manner to perform, regularly, every morning and every evening, the duty of secret prayer.

All these things should be explained to children in such a manner, as to render their views of them just and rational, and their practice of them evangelical, and not a mere matter of form.

2. *Morality; or the duties which respect our fellow-men.*

Among these, *truth should hold the first place.* As I expect speedily to examine the nature and importance of this subject, as well as most others which will be mentioned in this discussion; it will be unnecessary to expatiate upon them at present. It will be sufficient to say here, that a profound and reverential regard to truth should be awakened in the mind of a child, from the moment when he begins to assert any thing; that no variations from it, either in jest or in earnest, should ever be permitted to pass without animadversion; that its nature and importance should be explained to the child, as soon as he is able to understand them; that resistance to falsehood and prevarication should invariably be made unconditionally, and without any abatement; that this resistance should be made in every hopeful manner, and to every necessary degree, and should never cease, until the veracity of the child shall be effectually secured: that every encouragement to veracity, which prudence can suggest, should be holden out to him continually; and that a rigid example of speaking truth, and fulfilling promises, should be set before him by all with whom he corresponds, especially by the parents and the family, without any variation from it, either in reality or appearance; that all seeming departures from it should be carefully explained to him; and that he should be obliged to fulfil all his promises, if not unlawful, however inconvenient the fulfilment may be to the parents, or to him.

*Justice*, by which I intend *commutative justice, is a kindred virtue to truth; and should be taught, from the same period, with the same care.* Every child should be taught to pay all his debts, and to fulfil all his contracts, exactly in the manner, completely in the value, and punctually at

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the time. Every child should be discouraged from the propensity to make bargains; so early, so strongly, and so universally visible. He should be discouraged also from every wish to make what is called *a good bargain;* the common source of all cheating; and should be taught, that he is bound to render an equivalent for what he receives. Every bargain, disadvantageous to himself, he should be bound scrupulously to fulfil. Every thing which he has borrowed, he should be obliged to return, uninjured, at the time: and every thing belonging to others which he has lost, he should be required to replace. In this manner he will grow up to that sense of justice, without which it is impossible for virtue to exist.

Morality, begun in *truth,* and advanced in *justice,* is finished in *kindness.* The minds of children may be easily rendered kind by a wise cultivation; and by the want of it, will easily become unfeeling and cruel. Children should be taught, the first moment they are capable of being taught, a lively tenderness for the feelings, the sufferings, and the happiness, of all beings with whom they are conversant. The emperor Domitian has proved, that cruelty, when it cannot satiate itself on human misery, can be gratified even with the death of flies. Every child should be invariably instructed to exercise kindness towards animals, and to shun cruelty even to an insect. The plundering of birds' nests, and the capture of their young, is, in all ordinary cases, notwithstanding it is so generally allowed, an employment fitted only to harden the heart, and prepare it to be insensible to human sufferings. Still worse is the deplorable practice, extensively allowed also, of setting up poultry as a mark, to be destroyed by gradual torture. Worse still is the practice, so widely and shamefully extended in some parts of this country, of cock-fighting; abominable for its cruelty, and detestable for its fraud. Children should never injure animals without reproof solemnly administered, nor, as the cause may be, without punishment. All their unkindness to each other, and all the unkindness of others which falls within their knowledge, should be strongly and unconditionally reprobated. At the same time, every instance of their spontaneous tenderness and beneficence should be strongly commended; and, as

prudence may direct, followed by suitable rewards: while every instance of cruelty should be treated with efficacious discountenance and strenuous opposition; and should be seen to awaken in the mind of the parent detestation and horror. Among the exercises of kindness which are of prime importance, one of the most difficult to learn is the forgiveness of injuries. On this account it should be taught early, unceasingly, and strenuously, with powerful persuasion, and distinguishing rewards. An unforgiving and revengeful spirit, on the contrary, should, however difficult and discouraging the task, be at all events broken down; and no attempt should be omitted, until this work is effectually accomplished.

3. *Self-government.*

*Children should, from the beginning, be taught to be industrious.* The value of time should be explained to them, as the means of all usefulness and enjoyment, of duty and salvation. To enable them to employ it in the best manner, they should be early accustomed to methodize it by useful divisions; allotting regularly one period to devotion, another to business, and another to recreation. Their business also should be methodized by subordinate divisions: one period being regularly destined to one employment, and another to another. In this manner they will soon see, that far more can be accomplished than by loose and desultory efforts. Industry, naturally disagreeable, may be rendered pleasing by address and habituation, advice and example. As this is the fountain, under God, of all human attainments and enjoyments; no exertions should be left untried to establish it, at a very early date, in the minds of children.

*Upon industry in his child, every parent should graft economy.* To economy, the human mind is more reluctant, than even to industry. In order to relish it, two great difficulties must be overcome. One is the powerful relish for the gratifications, which occasion our expense. The other is the constant, laborious attention, so necessary to the practice of that branch of economy, which is employed in preserving the various kinds of property. The latter of these is usually the greater difficulty; but may, as well as

the other, be overcome by long-continued, prudent, and unremitted exertion.

The children of the honest and industrious poor, and of persons in moderate circumstances, are usually taught economy from necessity; in most instances, however, not so thoroughly and happily as ought to be wished. The children of opulent parents, and of the idle poor, are, to a great extent, sadly neglected, as to this necessary part of their education. The consequence is, that the children of the one are kept poor, and the children of the other frequently reduced to poverty. Economy is at least as necessary to prosperity, even in a moderate degree, as industry itself. Equally necessary is it to furnish us the power of doing justice to others; safety from temptations to fraud, falsehood, and innumerable other evils; support in sickness and old age; the education and comfortable settlement of our families; and a host of other blessings. It is therefore an indispensable duty; and is made such by the example and precept of our Saviour. When he had fed a multitude by a creative act of his own, he directed his disciples to *gather up the fragments, that nothing might be lost.* What was their duty, in such a case, is certainly the duty of all men in all cases: and, however it may be despised by the proud and the prodigal, or however forgotten by the thoughtless, will be found of incalculable importance to their children.

At the same time, they should be carefully guarded against all tendencies to covetousness, and to every other exercise of a mean and narrow mind. Economy furnishes us with the ability to perform generous acts. Meanness prevents their existence; and destroys the spirit from which they spring. Meanness also roots up, in whatever form it may exist, all the tendencies to virtue; every stem on which it may be hopefully grafted.

Another thing, which ought to be cultivated with great care in the early minds of children, and which may be properly ranged under this head, is *the exercise of the gentle affections.* Violent affections seem to be the chief preventives of virtue, and its chief enemies. Gentle affections are the best preparation for it; and the best friends to it

which are furnished by human nature. All the affections of virtue are *ordinarily* gentle; the most amiable ones *always*. This is probably one powerful reason, why so many more Christians are usually found in the female sex than in ours; *viz.* that the softness and sweetness of their affections naturally coincide with religious impressions; while the violence of ours naturally resists them. Children should regularly be checked and subdued in every ebullition of passion; particularly of pride and anger. Nor should they be less carefully opposed in the more unobserved progress of avarice and ambition. The mischiefs of all these, and of all other inordinate, passions are known and acknowledged by all men. It will be only necessary to remark concerning them here, that, while they continue in full strength, they absolutely forbid all access of religion, and fix the mind in immoveable hostility to the divine pleasure. He who wishes his children to become the subjects of piety, should make it a prime object in their education, to check all their inordinate passions with an efficacy of resistance proportioned to the demands of each case; and should, with equal anxiety, teach them to check, restrain, and subdue, themselves. Usually, this work may in early childhood be easily done; but unhappily is too often neglected. The passions in the mind, like weeds in a garden, sufficiently tender and feeble at first, soon strengthen themselves to such a degree by rankness of growth, that to subdue them becomes difficult, if not impossible. Few persons have then sufficient resolution to undertake the task: fewer have sufficient perseverance to execute it. When begun in season, it is ordinarily attended with little difficulty.

Gentle affections should be encouraged in children by all the means in our power. They should constantly witness them in *us*. The exercise of them, in themselves, should from time to time be commended; the amiableness of them explained and enforced. Companions, possessed of such affections, should be selected for them; and books, containing persuasive examples and illustrations of this character, should be put into their hands.

Intimately connected with this object is *civility and*

*sweetness of manners.* Lord Chesterfield justly observes, that such manners are directly required by our Saviour's practical exposition of the second great command of the moral law: *that we should do to others whatsoever we would that they should do to us.* All men love to be *treated* with civility; and are bound, therefore, by the law of God, to exhibit such treatment to others. The Chinese proverbially and justly observe, that a man without civility is a man without common sense. Such manners are the proper polish of that most beautiful of all diamonds, virtue; and enable it to shine with its own peculiar lustre. They render the character lovely; increase exceedingly the power of those who possess them, to do good; and secure to them a thousand kind offices, to which coarse, rough, and brutal men, are utterly strangers. Children, in order to be taught such manners, beside being particularly instructed in their nature, should especially be accustomed to the company of those from whom they may be successfully copied.

There is scarcely a fault, to which children are prone, which is more difficult to be prevented, than *the imprudence of the tongue.* Passion prompts them to expressions of rashness and violence: example, to profaneness; the love of being listened to, to the betraying of secrets, the telling of marvellous stories, the recitation of private history, and the utterance of slander. In these and other similar ways they often wound their own character, and the peace both of themselves and their connexions. Every attempt of every such kind ought to be repelled at once, and effectually crushed. Neglect here is countenance; inattention, encouragement. What then shall be said of parents, who directly listen to their children while thus employed; and in this manner solicit them to transgress? Few evils need to be more steadily watched, or more powerfully resisted, than this. A prudent and well-governed tongue is an invaluable possession; whether we consider the peace of the possessor, the comfort of his family, or the quietness of his neighbourhood. *A busy-body in other men's matters* is classed by St. Peter with *murderers, thieves, and malefactors.*

Universally, *children should be guarded, and taught to guard themselves with the utmost care, against temptations.* They should be cautioned not to go, and restrained from going, to places of evil resort. They should be anxiously prevented from the company of wicked children; and, as much as may be, from that of all other persons, from whom they will hear dangerous sentiments, or who will set before them dangerous conduct. They should also be never brought, when it can be avoided, into contact with dangerous and fascinating objects. From such objects, indeed, and from such company, they cannot be entirely secluded, in such a world as this. By watchful and faithful parents, however, much may be done; it is impossible to say how much: but probably so much, as, in ordinary cases at least, perhaps in all, to secure the child from evil, to which he is exposed. One important mean of security, never to be forgotten, is an early, strong, and habitual impression of their exposure to temptation, accompanied by explicit and thorough information of the evils which will certainly result from yielding to its influence. This will prove a safeguard to the child, when the parent cannot be present to warn him of his danger.

It will be remembered, that I originally proposed to mention a part only of those things which are to be taught to children. Those which have been mentioned are, if I mistake not, possessed of distinguished importance; and will, I suppose, be acknowledged to claim a primary place in parental instruction. I shall now proceed to consider *the manner in which they should be taught.*

1. *The instruction of children should be begun in very early life.*

Very young children are capable of learning many things of incalculable importance to themselves. All parents appear to me to labour under serious mistakes with regard to this subject; and begin to teach their children many things, at least at a later period, than that in which *they* would advantageously begin to receive them. The infant mind opens faster than we are apt to be aware. This is the true reason why very young children are almost always thought peculiarly bright and promising. We customarily attribute

this opinion to parental fondness: in some degree, perhaps justly; but it arises extensively from the fact, that the intellect of little children outruns in its progress our utmost expectations: the goodness of God intending, I suppose, to provide by this constitution of things the means of receiving the instruction so indispensable to children at that period. Of this advantage every parent should carefully avail himself. At the same time he should remember, that this is the season for making lasting impressions. The infant mind lays strong hold of every thing which it is taught. Both its understanding and affections are then unoccupied. The affections are then also remarkably susceptible, tender, and vigorous. Every person knows the peculiarly impressive power of novelty. On the infant mind every thing is powerfully impressed, because every thing is new. From these causes is derived that remarkable fact so commonly observed, that early impressions influence the character and the life beyond all others; and remain strong and vivid after most others are worn away.

From these remarks must be seen, with irresistible evidence, the immense importance of seizing this happy period to make religious impressions on the minds of our offspring. He who loses this season, is a husbandman who wastes the spring in idleness and sows in midsummer. How can such a man rationally expect a crop? To the efforts of the parent at this period, the professed instructor is bound to add his own. The instructor, who in a school, a college, or a university, does not employ the opportunities which he enjoys of making religious impressions on the minds of his pupils, neglects a prime part of his duty; and so far wraps his talent in a napkin, and buries it in the earth.

2. *Children should be gradually instructed.*

Knowledge plainly should be communicated in that progressive course in which the mind is most capable of receiving it. The first things which children attain, are *words* and *facts*. To these succeed, after no great interval, *plain doctrines and precepts*. As they advance in years and understanding, they gradually comprehend, and therefore relish, doctrines of a more complicated and dif-

ficult nature. This order of things, being inwrought in the constitution of the human mind, should be exactly followed. When it is counteracted or forgotten, the task of instruction will ever be difficult; and the progress of the pupil slow and discouraging. A loose and general attention to this great rule of instruction seems to have prevailed in most enlightened countries, but a far less accurate one than its importance deserves.

Among the facts and doctrines suited to the early mind, none are imbibed with more readiness, or fastened upon with more strength, than the existence, presence, perfections, and providence, of God: the creation of all things by his power; its own accountableness to him; and the immense importance of his favour, and therefore of acting in such a manner as to obtain his approbation. These things then, together with such as are inseparably connected with them, should without fail be always taught at the dawn of the understanding.

3. *The impressions which are useful to children should be made continually.*

Children, more than any other persons, need *line upon line, and precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little.* It is in no sense sufficient to have taught them either truths or duties. The parent's duty is *then* only begun. He is not only to teach, but to inculcate; to recall what has been forgotten; to explain what has been imperfectly apprehended; to rectify what has been misunderstood, to illustrate what has been obscure; and to enforce what has been unfelt. A few minds are indeed so happily susceptible, as readily to understand, deeply to feel, and permanently to retain, most of that which they are taught. But such minds are rare and solitary. Almost all children demand and ought to receive instruction in the manner here recommended.

4. *Instruction should be communicated to children with unwearied patience.*

Christ, in this and many other respects, has left instructors a perfect example. Although his disciples were *dull of hearing, and slow of heart to believe;* although they had many, and those often very unreasonable, prejudices; his patience was never lessened. He taught them in the gra-

dual manner which I have recommended; *as*, in his own language, *they are able to bear*. He taught them also without weariness, without fretfulness, without discouragement, without reproaches, and without intermission. At times indeed he reproved them, and with some degree of severity; but always with tenderness and good-will.

In this manner should parents teach their children; should be patient with their ignorance, their backwardness to receive instruction, their mistakes, their forgetfulness, the necessity of teaching them again and again, and the doubts and difficulties which from time to time they suggest. In all this, the parents should manifest not only quietness of mind, but cheerfulness and willingness to repeat their instructions.

5. *Instructions should be given persuasively.*

Children are often discouraged from learning by being compelled to this employment, and punished for not learning; by the gloomy countenance, morose temper, and forbidding manners, of the instructor; by being unreasonably confined, and unreasonably debarred from those harmless gratifications, which are necessary to preserve their health and spirits; and not unfrequently by the imposition of harder tasks than they are able to perform. If I supposed such persons to act understandingly; I should believe that they intended to prevent children from learning; and that their measures were skilfully contrived for this purpose. But to the end for which they are professedly adopted, they could scarcely be fitted in a more unhappy manner.

To most children learning may be made an alluring object. Pleasantness of disposition, affability, condescension, serenity of countenance, and sweetness of manners, in the instructor; engaging books, moderate tasks, reasonable confinement to study, a proper allowance of recreation, commendation kindly given when merited, and well-directed rewards for improvement; are usually sufficient persuasives to engage children in a spontaneous and pleasurable course of learning. The instructor who will not follow this course, must be very imperfectly fitted for his employment.

6. *Children should be taught by example.*

All men will admit, that the moral branches of education can never be taught successfully without the aid of example. Example has, in a great measure, the same influence on every other part of education. *Children do little beside imitating others.* Parents who read, will have reading children. Industrious parents will have industrious children. Lying parents will have lying children. Example, therefore, is of the highest possible consequence in this important concern.

7. *Children should be taught in such a manner, as to be prompted unceasingly to the most vigorous exertion of their own talents.*

The human mind is not a mere vessel into which knowledge is to be poured. It is better compared to a bee, fed during the first periods of its existence by the labours of others; but intended, ere long, to lift its wings in the active employment of collecting sweets from every field within its reach. To such excursions, and to the accomplishment of such purposes, the mind should be early and sedulously allured. This is the only way to give it energy and strength. Without the active exercise of its powers, neither body nor mind can acquire vigour. Without bodily exertions, Goliath, six cubits high, would have been only a gigantic boy: without mental efforts, Newton would have been merely an *infant of days.*

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# SERMON CXII.

## FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

## DUTY OF PARENTS.

*Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.*—PROV. XXII. 6.

In the preceding discourse, I distributed the duties of parents under three heads;

*The maintenance,*

*The education,* and

*The settlement*, of children.

*The education of children* I proposed also to consider under the two heads of

*Instruction*, and

*Government*.

The first of these general heads, together with the former division of the second, were examined in that discourse. I shall now proceed to make some observations on the remaining subjects proposed for discussion at that time.

The parental duty, which, according to the plan mentioned, next demands our attention, is, *the government of children*. The observations which I shall make concerning this subject will respect,

*The nature*,

*The end*, and,

*The importance, of this government*; and

*The manner in which it is to be administered*.

Concerning *the nature of parental government, its end*, and *its importance*, my observations must be very summary.

The nature of all government is justly defined to be the control of one being over the actions of another. This control in the hands of parents over their children is at once the most absolute, perhaps, and clearly the most gentle and indulgent, dominion which is exercised by mankind. The parent's will is the only law to the child; yet, being steadily regulated by parental affection, is probably more moderate, equitable, and pleasing, to him, than any other human government to any other subject. It resembles the divine government more in its nature, and, when wisely administered, in its efficacy, than any other. Correction, sometimes esteemed the whole of it, is usually the least part; a part, indispensable indeed, and sometimes efficacious, when all others have failed. Beside correction it includes advice, commendation, blame, reproof, rebuke, admonition, expostulation, influence, restraint, confinement, rewards, the deprivation of enjoyments, the infliction of disgrace, the denial of favour, and various other things: each possessing peculiar efficacy: and all of them efficacious, not only in themselves, but also by the variety of administration which they furnish, and the relative power which they derive, merely from the fact of succeeding each other.

*The end of parental government is undoubtedly the good of children.* The end of all government is the good of the governed. Children are given to parents, not to be a convenience to *them*, but that *they* may become blessings to the children. In this way, and ordinarily in this alone, will the children become blessings to the parents. Every parent should fix in his mind a strong, habitual sense of this end. The good to be accomplished for the child, should be the object of inquiry in every administration of this nature. The kind, the degree, and the continuance, of the punishment, and the reward, should be all determined by *it*. In a word, it should absolutely govern all the conduct of the parent towards the child.

*The importance of parental government* will demand very few remarks; since no man will question it in earnest. Every parent ought to remember, that his child is committed to *him;* that all his interests are put into his hands; and that to train up his family for usefulness and for heaven, is ordinarily the chief duty which God requires him to perform; the chief good which he can ever accomplish. If he neglects this duty, he ought to expect that it will be left undone; for no other person will usually undertake it. If *he* does not accomplish this good, he ought to believe that it will never be accomplished. On the contrary, the child will be left to himself, to evil companions; to men whose business it is to corrupt the young; to unbridled lusts; to unrestrained iniquity; to Satan, and to ruin. He ought also to remember, that childhood is the seed-time for all good; the season when every useful impression is most happily made; the time when almost all that which can be done for the child, is to be done. He should remember, that the encouragement is very great. Experience abundantly proves, that well-governed children are almost always well behaved; and that almost all religious persons are of this number. What experience declares, the Scriptures ratify. The text, if not an absolute promise, is yet a glorious encouragement to this parental duty. In the mean time, the peace and pleasantness of his family; the filial piety, amiable conduct, and fair reputation, of his children; furnish a rich hope, that he will in the end assemble around him his little flock, and be able to say, with exultation and

transport, *Behold, here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me.*

*The manner in which parental government ought to be administered,* demands a more extensive consideration.

The observations which I propose to make concerning it, I shall arrange under the following heads.

1. *The government of children should begin with the dawn of their reason.*

I have already applied this observation to *parental instruction:* it is still more forcibly applicable to *parental government.* The habit of submission can never be effectuated without difficulty, unless commenced at the beginning. The first direction of the infant mind has been often and justly compared to the first figure assumed by a twig, which is ordinarily its figure during every subsequent period of its growth. If children are taught effectually to obey at first; they will easily be induced to obey ever afterward. Almost all those who are disobedient, are such as have been neglected in the beginning. The twig was suffered to stiffen, before an attempt was made to bend it into the proper shape. Then it resumed, as soon as the pressure ceased, its former figure. If begun in season, the task of securing filial obedience will usually be easy, and the object effectually gained. If then neglected, it will be attended by a multitude of difficulties, and discouragements; and its efficacy will be doubtful, if not fruitless.

2. *Parental government should be administered with constancy.*

The *views* manifested by the parent concerning the conduct of the child, should ever be *the same.* His good conduct should be invariably approved; his bad conduct invariably disapproved. The *measures* of the parent also should be universally of the same tenor. All proper encouragement should be regularly holden out to obedience, and all rational opposition be steadily made to disobedience.

The *active superintendence* of the child should be *unremitted.* He should feel, that he is ever an object of parental attention; ever secure, when his behaviour merits it, of parental favour; and ever conscious, that his faults will expose him to frowns and censures. This unremitted con-

sciousness of the child can never be produced, but by the unremitted care and watchfulness of the parent. The Roman maxim, *Obsta principiis, Resist the beginnings of evil;* is in all cases replete with wisdom; but is applicable to no case perhaps with such force, as to those of children. All their tendencies should be watched. Every commencement of evil, every tendency towards it, should be observed and resisted.

The *efforts of parents* in this employment should also be *unwearied. Discouragement and sloth are two prime evils in the conduct of parental government.* The parent, seeing so many and so unceasing exertions necessary for the accomplishment of his purpose, usually feels, either earlier or later, as if it could never be accomplished; and hence, from mere discouragement, at first relaxes, and finally gives over, his endeavours. Frequently also he becomes, after a moderate number of trials, wearied of a duty which he finds so burdensome; and through mere indolence desists from every strenuous attempt to discharge it. Such parents ought to remember, that they are labouring for the salvation of their children; that this mighty object is pre-eminently committed to *them;* and that these reasons for their negligence will be unhappily alleged at the final day.

I have elsewhere compared the mind of a child to a rude mass of silver in the hand of the silversmith. A single stroke of the hammer, a hundred, or even a thousand, change its form in a very imperfect degree; and advance it but little towards the figure and beauty of the vessel which is intended. Were he to stop, nothing valuable would be accomplished. A patient continuance of these seemingly inefficacious efforts, however, will in the end produce the proposed vessel in its proper form, and with the highest elegance and perfection. With the same patience and perseverance should parental exertions be made, when employed in forming the minds of children. Thus made, they will usually find a similar issue.

3. *The government of children should be uniformly kind.* Parents not unfrequently administer discipline to their children, because they feel themselves obliged to it by conscience, or to gratify anger, or to retaliate some offence, or to compel their children to accomplish some pleasure of

their own. Whenever they act under the proper influence of conscience, they are certainly so far to be commended. But whenever they intend merely to unburden their consciences, and feel, that this is done by merely punishing their children, whether the punishment be wise, just, and useful, or not; either their consciences must be very well informed, or *they* must be very little inclined to satisfy their demands. In the other three cases the discipline is merely selfish; and partakes as little of the true nature of family government, as that of a den of thieves. There are parents who frankly but foolishly declare, that they cannot correct their children, unless when they are in a passion. Such parents I should advise never to correct them at all. Children, even at an early age, usually understand the nature of such government, and indeed almost always discern more perfectly the nature of our improper conduct, than we either wish or suspect. He who thinks his child incapable of understanding his open infirmities, will almost of course be deceived. The government of *passion*, children will always perceive to be causeless, variable, weak, and sinful. The parent who administers it, will be dreaded by them indeed, but he will only be dreaded in the same manner as a wild beast. He will neither be reverenced nor loved. His commands, so far as they cannot be avoided without danger, will be followed by obedience:—so far as they can, they will be neglected. The obedience will be a mere eye-service, and never spring from the heart. When the parent is absent therefore, the child will pursue his own inclinations, and will generally counteract his parent's pleasure whenever his own safety will permit. Such a government prompts the wickedness of children ten times where it restrains it once.

The government of *retaliation* is the government of revenge, and therefore not the government of a parent, but that of an enemy. In this manner it will be regularly regarded by the child. Accordingly he will, as far as possible, prevent its effects by concealing his faults in every way which his ingenuity or circumstances can suggest. In pursuit of this object, he will practise every trick, and fetch, and fraud, which his cunning can devise; and ultimately utter every equivocation and every direct falsehood which

the necessity of extricating himself may require. Nor will it be long before he will consider his parent as one party and himself as the other. He will then begin to retaliate in turn. In this manner a controversy will be instituted, in which it will be the business of each to provoke and injure the other. The child will not indeed be able to meet his antagonist in the open field, but he will endeavour to supply this defect by watching every opportunity to do mischief secretly, and by making up in cunning what he wants in power. A species of Indian hostilities will thus be carried on by him, and frequently for such a length of time, as to embitter the peace of the parent, and to ruin the character of the child.

The government *which is employed merely in making a child subservient to the caprice and convenience of a parent,* is too obviously selfish and sordid ever to be misunderstood; and it needs only to be understood to be detested. From parents certainly, if from any human beings, we look for disinterestedness, especially in the management of their children. But there are parents who regard their children as hard masters regard their slaves; and value them, only as they hope to derive profit from their labour, or convenience from their subserviency to their selfish wishes. No words are necessary to shew, that such views, feelings, and conduct, are contradictions to the parental character and duties alike. Equally hostile are they to the good of the child, and are calculated only to destroy all his tendencies towards becoming a useful man. Persons who act in either of these modes, have never set before his eyes the true end of parental government, and have no conceptions of the real nature of that great duty to which they have been called by their Maker. A little attention to this subject would convince them, that all their government is to be administered under the controlling influence of kindness only; kindness, directed solely to the good of their children. They are indeed to reprove and to punish them, but this is to be done only for their good, and never to gratify the resentment, nor to promote the selfish purposes, of the parent. It is to be done because their faults are to be repressed, and because these are the proper means of repressing them; because it is necessary that the children

should be sober, discreet, virtuous, and useful; and because these are the proper means of preparing them to become so. As such means only, is all discipline to be used. In every other view, the nature of discipline is subverted. Reproof becomes reproach, advice contumely, and correction an assault. Instead of rendering the child what he ought to be, the parent will, in this way, destroy all the worth which he at present possesses, and prevent that which he might acquire.

Among the modes of exhibiting kindness in governing our children, *calmness and moderation in reproving and correcting* are indispensable. He to whom this office falls ought, more than in almost any other case, to be in perfect possession of himself. Every thing which he does or says, ought to prove that he is so. His countenance ought then to be mild, his accent gentle, his words free from all unkindness, and his conduct such as to prove that he is compelled to this unwelcome office by duty only.

With this spirit, parents will naturally be led *not to govern their children too much.* Like certain Mohammedans, who estimate the degree of their devotion by the number of prayers which they utter, some persons suppose their duty of governing their children to be performed meritoriously, merely because they reprove and punish their children very often, and accordingly make it their business to find fault with them from morning to night, and to punish them from week to week. In this way, both reproof and punishment lose all their power, and only serve to case-harden the child against his duty. Children are as easily injured by too much government as by too little. Children ought always to be watched with attention and tenderness, but not to be harassed.

Another important office of kindness is, *to administer reproof and punishment privately.* Children sometimes commit their faults before others when the parent is present; and necessity may then demand that they should be reproved on the spot, and in the presence of those who witness the fault. Whenever this is not the case, it will, in almost every instance, be desirable to administer the proper discipline in private. In this case the child will feel that his character is saved, and will be solicitous, in

future, to preserve his own character by good conduct. He will feel also, that he is treated kindly, and will be grateful for the kindness. His mind will be left free for the undivided exercise of veneration for his parent. The parent at the same time will enjoy the best possible opportunity for reproving him freely, largely, pungently, and solemnly; without that embarrassment which will necessarily arise from the presence of others. In the presence of others, the child will feel his pride wounded, his character sacrificed, and himself disgraced; and all this without any visible necessity. He will therefore be angry, stubborn, pert; and, not improbably, disposed to repeat his former faults, and to perpetrate others. These emotions and these designs, he will, not unnaturally, disclose to his companions; and they, not less unnaturally, will enhance and encourage them. Thus the whole force of the parental administration will always be weakened, and most frequently destroyed.

4. *The government of children should always be accompanied by proofs of its reasonableness and equity.*

Many parents err through *too much* indulgence, and many through *too little*. Both extremes are unhappy, as well as unreasonable. Every child ought clearly to see, that his parent's censures are not unkind, and that his indulgence is not foolish. To this end, he ought regularly, as soon as his capacity will admit, to be taught the reasons on which the conduct of his parent from time to time is founded: not as a piece of respect to him which he may demand, but as wisely-directed information, which will be eminently useful to both parent and child. To the parent it will be useful, by establishing his character in the eyes of his child, as a ruler whose measures are all originated and directed by solid reasons and sound wisdom, steady equity and unfailing kindness: as a ruler, whose government is to be reverenced, whose commands are to be obeyed, and whose wishes are to be accorded with, from their reasonableness as well as their authority, from the benefit as well as the duty of obeying, and from the pleasure universally experienced in conforming to the will of such a ruler. In this case the parent is secured of the obedience of the child when he is absent (as for the greater

part of the time he must necessarily be), no less than when he is present, and is assured also that his obedience will be voluntary and exact, and on both these accounts delightful. To the child this information will be highly advantageous, because it will early accustom him to obey from the reasonableness of obedience, and will insensibly lead him to examine, feel, and submit to, predominating reasons; not only in cases of filial duty, but in all others. Thus he will habitually grow up to a general accordance with the dictates of reason, and the representations of conscience; will sustain a far more elevated and desirable character than a child governed by mere authority; and when absent, abroad, or arrived at the years of self-direction, will be incomparably more safe. The family, in this case, will exhibit the delightful spectacle of rational beings, governed by rational beings; and not the humiliating one of slaves struggling under the domination of a master.

5. *The government of children should be self-consistent.*

Every parent ought to possess himself of *a scheme* of governing his children before he commences the practice. In this scheme the same things should be uniformly aimed at; the same things required; and the same things prohibited. The character of the parent also, as displayed in the execution of this scheme, should invariably be the same; and that should be the character formed of reason and principle only. In all the parent's measures the child should see, uniformly and irresistibly, that the parent hates vice above all things, and above all things loves virtue. This hatred to vice and love to virtue, ought to appear to be inwrought in the very constitution of the parent's mind; to be inseparable from his habitual views and feelings; and to be the first, the unvarying, and, as far as may be, the only, movements of his soul with respect to these great subjects. Of course, all his conduct ought to present the unquestionable proof which practice and example furnish, that this is his real character.

In consequence of this consistency, children will uniformly expect the same parental opposition to their faults, and the same countenance to their virtuous conduct. Few motives will operate more powerfully than such expectations, either to persuade them to virtue, or to restrain them

from sin. Fewer crimes will therefore be committed by them; and of course the parent will have fewer transgressions to reprove or punish. In this manner, a great part of the parent's labour will be prevented; and not a small part of his pain. What remains to be done will be incomparably more pleasant. His encouragement to proceed will also be unspeakably greater. To see the efficacy of our endeavours, is the most animating of all earthly inducements to continue them.

Besides, children will, in this case, regard their parents with far more veneration than in any other. Consistency of character is essential to all dignity. A changing man, even when not a faulty one, is almost necessarily regarded as a trifler. A man, on the contrary, exhibiting uniform views and principles, in a life uniformly directed by them, governed and governing by the same rules, and an unchanging regard to them, is always possessed of dignity; and, when seen to be steadily opposed to sin and folly, and attached to wisdom and virtue, is possessed of high dignity. This character, seen in a parent, will invariably engage the highest filial veneration.

When children become satisfied, that the restraints and corrections which they experience from their parents, spring only from a conviction that they are right and necessary; their consciences will almost always acquiesce. What is remarkable, and would, were it not common, be surprising; they love the parent who administers them, much more than him who neglects them. Between parental government conducted in this manner, and that which is passionate, desultory, and fraught with inconsistencies, the difference can scarcely be calculated.

As a general conclusion of my observations concerning the education of children, I add, that *all the efforts of the parent ought to be accompanied with daily prayer to God for his blessing.* It is the indispensable duty of mankind to *pray always with all prayer.* Few, very few, are those employments in human life, which so loudly call for the faithful performance of this duty, as that which has been under discussion. Wisdom, patience, faithfulness, kindness, and constancy, are rarely demanded of man in any concern, either so unceasingly, or in so great a degree, as in this. All these qualifications are indispensable to our

success; and we need them indispensably from *the Father of lights,* who alone can furnish these and all other *good gifts.* If we possessed them all, we should equally need his blessings to give an efficacious and happy issue to our exertions. Both the qualifications and the blessings, then, are to be asked *of God, who giveth liberally unto all;* and who hath assured us, that *every one who asketh shall receive.* The parent who educates his children with the greatest care, and yet fails to invoke the blessing of God upon his labours, has done but half his duty; and is entitled to no promise of success.

III. *I shall now make a few observations concerning the settlement of children.*

The parent's duty with respect to this subject will be principally concerned with the following things.

1. *The choice of that business in which he is to spend principally his life.*

In selecting this object, a parent is bound to regard the state of his own circumstances; the reasonable expectations of his child; his talents; his inclinations; the probability of his obtaining a competent subsistence; the prospect of his usefulness; and the security of his virtue. It will be easily seen that these are discretionary things, to be judged of as well as we are able, and reducible to no precise general rule. Where children are not peculiarly forward, and parents not peculiarly prejudiced, the advantage of the child will, in ordinary cases, be sufficiently consulted. The principal difficulty here will usually be, to determine how far regard is to be had to his inclinations. A degree of indulgence is always to be given them. When they direct to a prudent and profitable employment, there can be no controversy; nor when they direct to a dangerous one. All the real perplexity will spring from cases of a doubtful nature. Here the child's inclinations are supposed to lean one way, and the judgment of the parent another. If the parent apprehends the bias of the child to be invincible, it will be both prudent and right to yield to his inclinations; if not, he may lawfully require the child to make an experiment of the business which *he* has preferred. The child is then bound to submit quietly to the choice of the parent; and to endeavour faithfully to subdue his own opposing

inclinations. If after a fair trial he finds them unconquerable, the parent is, in my view, bound to yield the contested point. The happiness of the child ought here to be the commanding object; and no child can be happy, who is prevented from following the business which he loves, and compelled to pursue that which he hates.

Universally, the parent's duty demands of him to place his child, so far as the case will permit, in that employment which upon the whole is best; which will probably be most productive of his comfort, reputation, usefulness, and piety. To some children, on account of their peculiar dispositions, certain employments are sufficiently safe, which for others are to be regarded as eminently dangerous. The business in which children are to be placed, when they are exposed by their dispositions to peculiar temptations, should, as far as may be, always be such as to counteract their dispositions. The employments which awaken a moderate ambition, and a moderate desire of wealth and pleasure, and which yet disappoint no reasonable expectations of children, are usually preferable to all others. Those of a contrary nature, and those particularly which are expected to produce sudden opulence and speedy aggrandizement, or which conduct to voluptuousness, are fraught with infinite danger and mischief. *They that will be rich,* or great, or voluptuous, *fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, that drown men in destruction and perdition. The love of* these things *is the root of all evil; and those who covet after them, pierce themselves through with many sorrows.* Most parents wish these things for their children; but they *know not what spirit* they *are of.* Most parents also wish their sons to be geniuses, and their daughters to be beauties. How unfounded, how self-deceiving, are all these desires! I do not deny, that many men of high office and of great wealth, men who have possessed in abundance all those which are called the enjoyments of life, have been pious; and, so far as this world permits, happy. I do not deny, that such has been the character and state of many men remarkable for their talents, and of many women distinguished for their beauty. I do not deny, that all these things are, in their nature, to be regarded as blessings; or that they sometimes are ac-

tually blessings. But to most of mankind they are plainly curses; and probably to all who ardently desire them. What a melancholy history would the whole history be of beauties, geniuses, and men in high office, of great wealth, and determined sensuality!

2. *Marriage.*

With respect to this subject, children are usually governed by inclination only, or chiefly: their parents sometimes by judgment; sometimes by avarice; sometimes by ambition; sometimes by hatred to the family or person with whom the child is intended to be connected; and sometimes by favouritism for other persons, or families. The parent ought to be influenced by his unbiassed judgment only. By every thing else he will, without suspecting it, be deceived: and sometimes, in a degree which can neither be foreseen nor limited, render both himself and his child unhappy through life.

Parents can never lawfully compel their children to marry persons who are objects of their dislike; nor use at all for such a purpose that influence, or those persuasives, which operate upon tender and susceptible minds as the worst kind of compulsion. The reasons are plain. The child would be made miserable; and could not, in any event, without a prevarication of the same nature with perjury, take upon himself the marriage vows. But during the minority of his children, he may be required, by indispensable duty, to restrain them from marrying in certain cases. This however is an extreme exercise of authority; and should take place only where the cases are extreme; cases, for example, in which the intended partner is an infidel; or grossly vicious; or of a family scandalous for vice; or in some other case of a similar importance. In all inferior cases, the parent's duty is, in my view, confined to information; to persuasion, kindly and reasonably conducted; and to such delays of the intended connexion, as will furnish opportunity to give these dissuasives their full operation. In these cases, children are bound to listen with the utmost willingness and impartiality to the parent's reasons; and deeply to feel and to respect his pleasure. If the reasons are solid; they ought to be influenced by their whole force; and, as far as may be, to overcome their own inclinations:

remembering, that, although their own happiness is the *first* thing to be regarded in forming such a connexion, that of their parents is the *second;* and that parental opposition to their wishes can rarely aim at any thing but their own good. When children have used all reasonable expedients to bend their inclinations to the wishes of their parents, and are yet unable to subdue them, their noncompliance can lawfully neither be punished nor resented.

3. *Assistance towards acquiring a competent living.*

When children commence their settlement in life, they often need assistance, at least as much as in earlier periods. This assistance is however principally confined to two articles; giving advice, and furnishing pecuniary aid. All parents perhaps are sufficiently willing to give advice; and most, I believe, are willing to befriend their children with pecuniary assistance, in such a degree, as is not felt to be inconvenient themselves. There are those however who impart sparingly enough; and there are others still who are disposed to give little or nothing. Avarice sometimes influences the parent's conduct in this respect; and oftener, I believe, a reluctance to lessen the heap which we have been long gathering; and oftener still the wound which pride feels at being thought to possess less wealth, than the utmost of what we have amassed. These are always wretched reasons; and, in this case, reasons for wretched conduct. A child, when setting out in the world, finds himself surrounded by a multitude of difficulties; to struggle with which he must be very imperfectly prepared. Inexperienced alone, suddenly plunged into many perplexities, and unacquainted with the means of relieving themselves, children are often distressed, discouraged, and sometimes broken down; when the helping hand of a parent would, with no real inconvenience to himself, raise them to hope, resolution, and comfort. That parents, so situated, are bound by plain duty to assist their children in these circumstances can need no proof. He who will not thus relieve the offspring of his own bowels, even at the expense of being thought rich, or of being actually less rich, deserves not the name of a parent; and ought to be ashamed to shew his face among those who do. For my own part, I cannot conceive that a man, who will not deny himself a little

to befriend his own children, can have ever compassed the self-denial of forgiving his enemies; nor understand how he can possess sufficient confidence to stand up in morning and evening worship at the head of his family, and say, in his own name and theirs, *Our Father, who art in heaven.*

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# SERMON CXIII.

## FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

### DUTY OF RULERS.

*Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* —EXOD. XX. 12.

BESIDE the direct import of this precept, it has been generally and justly considered as by a very obvious analogy including those duties which are reciprocally to be rendered by men in various other relations; particularly those of superiors and inferiors, whatever may be the bias of their relative characters. To an examination of all these duties it might fairly lead. I shall however make it my guide to the investigation of one class of them only: viz. *the duties of magistrates and subjects.*

The relations of magistrate and subject are so obviously analogous to those of parents and children, that magistrates have been often styled *the fathers of their people;* and their people often called *their children.* No language of commendation is with more frequency, or with more emphasis, applied to a prince distinguished for his wisdom, justice, and benevolence, than that *he was a father to his subjects.* In this manner mankind have acknowledged the similarity of these relations; and from a similarity of relations, every man knows, must arise a similarity of duties. Accordingly the duty to magistrates is enjoined in the very same terms as that which is owed to parents.

*Fear God,* says St. Peter; *honour the king.* We are also directed by St. Paul to render *reverence, honour, custom,* and *tribute,* to the several orders of magistracy, as from time to time they are due.

It is my design in this discourse to state, in a summary manner, *the nature of civil government;* and *the respective duties of rulers and subjects.* This I shall do without even a remote reference either to the past or present state of our own government. I never preached what is commonly called a political sermon on the sabbath in my life: and I shall not begin now; although to preach such sermons is unquestionably the right, and in certain cases as unquestionably the duty, of every minister of the gospel. All that I shall attempt to perform is, to exhibit some of the primary principles and duties which pertain to government as a branch of moral science. The knowledge of these is in some degree necessary to every man, who wishes to discharge either the duties of a ruler, or those of a subject.

*The foundation of all government is undoubtedly the will of God.* Government, since the days of Mr. Locke, has been extensively supposed *to be founded in the social compact.* No opinion is more groundless than this. The great man whom I have mentioned was probably led to adopt it from his zeal to oppose the ridiculous whims of sir Robert Filmer; who taught, that *kings had a divine hereditary right to their thrones, by virtue of the original gift of universal dominion to Adam.* In opposing this monstrous absurdity, Mr. Locke fell into another not a whit more rational or defensible. This doctrine supposes, that mankind were originally without any government; and that in an absolute state of nature they voluntarily came together, for the purpose of constituting a body politic, creating rulers, prescribing their functions, and making laws directing their own civil duties. It supposes, that they entered into grave and philosophic deliberations; individually consented to be bound by the will of the majority; and cheerfully gave up the wild life of savage liberty, for restraints which, however necessary and useful, no savage could ever brook even for a day. Antecedently to such an assembly, and its decisions, this doctrine supposes, that men have no civil rights, obligations, or duties, and of course, that those who do not

consent to be bound by such a compact, are now not the subjects of either: such a compact, in the apprehension of the abettors of this doctrine, being that, which creates all the civil rights, obligations, and duties, of man.

The absurdities of this doctrine are endless. He who knows any thing of the nature of savages, knows perfectly, that *no savage was ever capable of forming such a design;* and that civilized life is indispensably necessary to the very perception of the things presupposed by this doctrine, and absolutely prerequisite to the very existence of such an assembly. Every one acquainted at all with savages, knows equally well, that, if they were capable of all this comprehension, *nothing short of omnipotence could persuade them to embrace such a scheme of conduct.* There is nothing which a savage hates more than the restraints of civilized life; nothing which he despises more, than the civilized character, its refinements, its improvements, nay, its very enjoyments. To have formed such an assembly, or even to have proposed such a system, men must have already been long governed and civilized.

At the same time, there is no fact more clearly evinced by the history of man, than that *such a compact never existed.* This even the abettors of it are obliged to confess; and this cuts up the doctrine by the roots. For, if the social compact was not a fact, it is nothing.

But it is alleged, that, *although this compact was never an express one, it may still be fairly considered as a tacit and implied compact.* To the very existence of a compact it is indispensable, that the contracting party should be conscious that the subject of the compact is proposed to him for his deliberation, choice, and consent; and that he does actually deliberate, choose, and consent. But there is not even the shadow of a pretence, that any man, considering himself as being in a state of nature, and subject to no civil government, was ever conscious of being invited to become a party to such a compact, and of having this question ever proposed to him for such deliberation, or such consent. *There is therefore as little foundation for the supposition of a tacit, as for that of an express, social compact.*

It is farther alleged, that *this scheme, although confessedly imaginary, may yet be advantageously employed to illus-*

*trate the nature of civil government.* In answer to this allegation, I shall only observe, that the philosopher, who believes falsehood to be necessary or useful to the illustration of truth, must be very hardly driven by his own weakness, or by the erroneousness of his system.

If it were indeed true that government is thus founded, then these fatal consequences would follow.

*Every despotism on earth must stand as long as the world continues.* Every subject of despotic power is by this doctrine supposed to promise his obedience to it; and no man can ever withdraw himself from the obligation of his own promise. A new government can never upon this scheme be substituted for a former, but by the choice of the majority of those who are subject to it: and, as men come into the world, there never can be in any country a majority of inhabitants, who have not already promised obedience to the existing government. A minority, therefore, must always comprise the whole number of those who can lawfully act in the business of modelling the government anew. Nor could even these act in concert without being guilty of rebellion. Nor could those who had already promised obedience be released from their promise. If therefore a new government were to be constituted, there must be two sets of inhabitants every where intermingled throughout such a country, and obeying two distinct and hostile governments.

*If any man, in any country, declines his consent to the compact, he is under no obligation to obey the existing government.* Personal consent, according to this scheme, is all that constitutes such obligation. Such a man may, therefore, fix himself in a state of nature. If he attacks others indeed, they may attack him in turn; but the government cannot lawfully meddle with him, nor with his concerns.

*If the ruler should violate any, even the least, part of his own engagements, then the subjects are released from their engagements: and, of course, from all obligation to obey the laws.* In other words, from the least violation of the ruler's engagements, a state of anarchy lawfully and necessarily ensues. If the subjects pass by such violation in silence, their consent to it is equally implied with their supposed original compact. Of course, the ruler may lawfully com-

mit the same violation again as often as he pleases; nor can the subjects lawfully complain, because they have consented to it in the same manner as to the pre-existing government. Every such violation therefore, which is not openly resisted, is finally sanctioned.

On the other hand, *if a subject violate any of his engagements, however small, the ruler may lawfully make him an outlaw; and deprive him of every privilege which he holds as a citizen.*

*A foreigner, passing through such a country, can be under no obligation to obey its laws; and, if he does any thing which may be construed as an outrage, must either be suffered to do it with impunity, or must be attacked by private violence.* Such attacks, a few times repeated, would convert any people into a horde of robbers.

*No man could, in such a government, be punished with death, however enormous might be his crimes;* because no man ever thought of making, or has any right to make, a surrender of his own life into the hands of others.

All these, and a multitude of other deplorable consequences follow, irresistibly follow, from the doctrine that government is founded on the social compact.

*Government,* as I have already remarked, *is founded in the will of God.* The evidence of this position is complete. That God made mankind in order to make them happy, if they themselves will consent to be so, cannot be questioned. As little can it be questioned, that government is indispensable to their happiness, and to all the human means of it; to the safety of life, liberty, and property; to peace; to order; to useful knowledge; to morals; and to religion. Nay, it is necessary to the very existence of any considerable numbers of mankind. A country without government would speedily, for want of those means of subsistence and comfort to the existence of which it is indispensable, became an Arabian desert; and that, however fruitful its soil, or salubrious its climate. Mankind have never yet been able to exist for any length of time in a state of anarchy. What reason so completely evinces, the Scriptures decide in the most peremptory manner. *The powers that be,* says St. Paul, *are ordained of God:* in other words, *government is an ordinance of God.*

It is not here to be intended, *that God has ordained a given form of government.* This he has never done, except in a single instance. He gave the Israelites a system, substantially of the republican form. This fact may perhaps afford a presumption in favour of such a form, wherever it is capable of existing, but can do nothing more. Nothing more is here intended, than *that God has willed the existence of government itself.* He has undoubtedly left it to nations to institute such modes of it, whenever this is in their power, as should best suit their own state of society.

As God willed the existence of government for the happiness of mankind; it is unanswerably certain, that every government is agreeable to his will just so far as it promotes that happiness; that that government which promotes it most, is most agreeable to his will; and that that government which opposes human happiness, is equally opposed to his will. From these undeniable principles, both rulers and subjects may easily learn most of their own duty. Whatever is conformed to them, is right; whatever is contrary to them, is wrong of course. This, it will be remembered, is the dictate both of common sense, and of the Scriptures.

Every ruler is accordingly bound to remember, that he is raised to the chair of magistracy solely for the good of those whom he governs. His own good he is to find in the consciousness of having promoted that of others; and in the support, affection, and respect, which they render, and are bound to render, him for discharging this important duty. There is no greater mistake, there is no more antiscriptural or contemptible absurdity, than the doctrine *of millions made for one;* of a ruler raised to the chair of magistracy, to govern for himself; to receive homage; to roll in splendour; to riot in luxury; to gratify pride, power, and ambition, at the expense of the toils and sufferings of his fellow-men. Such a ruler is only a public robber. Every man in office, however elevated, is bound to remember, as a being equally accountable to God with his fellow-men, that his personal rights are by the divine constitution and pleasure the same as those of others; that his personal gratification is of no more importance, and can claim no greater

sacrifices, than that of others; that peculation, fraud, falsehood, injustice, oppression, drunkenness, gluttony, lewdness, sloth, profaneness, irreligion, and impiety; in a word, every crime; is accompanied by a greater guilt in him, than in men at large; because of his superior advantages to know, and his superior inducements to perform, his duty. Forsaking all private gratifications then, so far as they are inconsistent with the public happiness, just so much more important than his, as those who enjoy it are more numerous, he is required, indispensably, to see that his government has that happy and glorious influence upon his people, which is described by a man thoroughly versed in this subject, in the following beautiful language. *The Spirit of the Lord spake by me; and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springeth out of the earth by the clear shining after rain.* 2 Sam. xxiii. 2—4.

To possess this beneficent influence; like this glorious luminary, to diffuse light, and warmth, and animation, and happiness, to all around him, a ruler ought,

1. *To be a man of absolute sincerity.*

Of the Ruler of the universe it is said, that *it is impossible that he should lie. Mercy and truth,* said the wisest ruler that ever lived in this world, *preserve the king. The lip of truth,* says the same prince, *shall be established for ever.* "If truth (said king John of France) were to be banished from the world, it ought still to find a residence in the breast of princes." On the importance of truth I shall have occasion to dwell hereafter. It ought however to be observed here, that truth is the basis on which rest all the natural and moral interests of intelligent beings; that neither virtue nor happiness can exist without it; and that falsehood, generally diffused, would ruin not only a kingdom or a world, but the universe; would change all rational beings into fiends, and convert heaven itself into a hell.

*There are two kinds of government; that of force, and that of persuasion.* A government of persuasion is the only moral or free government. A government of force may

preserve order in every case which that force can reach; but the order is that of a church-yard; the stillness and quiet of death. The inhabitants of a kingdom governed in this manner are tenants of the grave: moving masses indeed of flesh and bones, but the animating principle is gone. The soul is shrivelled and fled, and nothing remains but dust and putrefaction.

*A government of persuasion subsists only in the mutual confidence of the ruler and the subjects.* But where truth is not, confidence is not. A deceitful ruler is never believed for a moment. If we could suppose him desirous to do good, he would want the power; for none would trust either his declarations or his promises. The only feelings excited in the minds of the community towards him and his measures, would be jealousy and hatred. Even fools know, that upright and benevolent measures not only need no support from falsehood, but are ruined by it. The very connexion of falsehood, therefore, with any measures, proves irresistibly to all men, that the measures themselves are mischievous, and that the author of them is a villain. Where confidence does not exist, voluntary obedience cannot exist. A lying ruler, if his government is to continue, makes force or despotism indispensable to his administration. So sensible are even the most villanous magistrates of these truths, that they leave no measure untried to persuade their subjects, that themselves are men of veracity. Nay, all sagacious despots carefully fulfil their promises to such of their subjects as they think necessary to the support of their domination, and to the success of their measures. Falsehood may indeed, in the hands of a man of superior cunning, succeed for a time, but it can never last long; and, whenever detection arrives, it draws after it a terrible train of avengers.

Besides, lying is the most contemptible of all sins. *Ye are of your father the devil,* said our Saviour to the Jews; *for he was a liar from the beginning, and the father of it.* This contemptible resemblance to the vilest and most contemptible of all beings, the source of complete debasement to every one who is the subject of it, is pre-eminently contemptible in a ruler. He is, of course, the object both of

public and private scorn. No degradation is more indignantly regarded, than that of being governed by a liar.

*If a ruler hearken to lies,* says Solomon, *all his servants are wicked.* Such a magistrate will be served by none but profligate men. The evils of his government will therefore spread, by means of his subordinate officers, into every nook and corner of the land. Like the Simoom of Nubia, he spreads poison, death, and desolation, over the wretched countries subjected to his sway.

2. *A ruler is bound to be a just man.*

*He that ruleth over men,* saith God, *must be just.* This indeed is united of course with the preceding character. *He that speaketh truth,* saith Solomon, *sheweth forth righteousnesss.* The importance of justice in government is, like that of truth, inestimable; and, as it respects the divine government, is exhibited with wonderful force in that declaration of Moses, *He is the Rock;* that is, the immoveable foundation on which the universe rests. Why? The answer is, *his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment,* or justice; *a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.* On the truth and justice of the infinite Mind the universe is built, as a house upon a rock. "*Fiat justitia; ruat cœlum;*" is an adage proverbially expressing the judgment of common sense concerning this subject. *Let justice be done, although heaven itself should tumble into ruin.*

This comprehensive attribute demands in the

*First place, Of the legislator, that he enact just laws.*

Laws are the rules by which rulers themselves, as well as the people at large, are, or ought to be, governed. If these are unjust the whole system of administration will be a system of iniquity; and the mass of guilt thus accumulated, will rest primarily on the head of the legislator.

*Secondly; Of the judge, that all his interpretations of law, and all his decisions founded on it, be just. Woe unto them,* saith Isaiah, *who justify the wicked for a reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him. Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment,* said God to Israel; *thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge*

*thy neighbour. It is not good,* says Solomon, *to have respect of persons in judgment. He that saith unto the wicked,* that is, in a judicial sentence, *Thou art righteous, him shall people curse; nations shall abhor him. But to them that rebuke him shall be delight; and a good blessing shall come upon them.* Tribunals of justice bring laws to every man's fireside; and apply them directly to his property, liberty, person, and life. How just soever, how reasonable soever, laws may be, an iniquitous tribunal may prevent all their good effects; and render a country as miserable by its decisions, as it could be by the operations of original tyranny in the legislator. When God established the government of Israel, he himself formed the constitution, and enacted the laws. All the political evils which that people suffered therefore, were effectuated by the unjust applications of those laws. They were however oppressed at times as intensely as the nations who have been under despotic dominion. The guilt and the mischiefs of this oppression are, in the Scriptures, charged wholly and truly to the judicial and executive magistracy. The same evils, in the same degree, may be derived to any people from the same sources. A wise and upright judiciary is a public blessing, which no language can adequately exhibit; which no people can too highly prize, and too strenuously vindicate; and without which no people can be safe or happy.

*Thirdly; Of the executive magistrate, that he execute the laws faithfully, invariably, and exactly.* This is so plain a truth, and so universally acknowledged, as to need no illustration. The end of all legislative and judicial efforts is found here; and, if this great duty is unaccomplished, both legislative and judicial efforts, however wise, and just, and good, they may be, are a mere puppet-show.

3. *A ruler must be a benevolent man.*

Of the universal Ruler it is said, *God is love.* Of the same character ought all his earthly delegates to be possessed.

Under the influence of this spirit, infinitely important to the happiness of intelligent beings, *rulers are bound to make the public good their sole object in governing.* Their own personal interests, compared with the general interests,

are a unit to many millions; and are immensely better promoted by securing the common good, than by any possible pursuit of that which is private and selfish. If they think otherwise, it is either because they cannot or will not discern the truth.

Under the influence of this spirit also, *he is bound to administer justice with mercy.* In the conduct of such beings as men, there are very many cases in which a rule, generally just, becomes unjust by a rigid application. For these cases wise governments have endeavoured to provide by intrusting the proper magistrate with a discretionary authority; in the exercise of which, clemency may be extended wherever it may be extended with propriety. Even where a strict application of law is right and necessary, there may be a harshness and unkindness in the manner of application, sometimes scarcely less cruel than injustice in the application itself. A benevolent ruler will never administer government in this manner.

Universally, *a benevolent ruler will prevent, redress, relieve,* and *remove,* the wrongs both of the public and of individuals, as far and as soon as it shall be in his power. He will cast an affectionate eye on all the concerns of his countrymen; and, wherever he sees calamities arise, will kindly interpose with those means of relief which God has placed in his hands. The extensive power of doing good, with which he is intrusted by his Creator, he will consider as thus intrusted, only that he may do good; and will feel himself delightfully rewarded by having been selected as the honourable instrument for accomplishing so glorious a purpose. That all this is demanded by his duty, it is unnecessary even to assert.

4. *A ruler is bound to respect the laws of his country.*

By this I intend, particularly, that he is bound to conform to them in all his conduct, personal and public. The laws of every free country prescribe alike the conduct of the ruler and the ruled. The *official conduct* of all magistrates, whatever be their office, is directed by particular laws. To every one of these, so far as his own duties are marked out by it, each magistrate is bound to conform with absolute exactness: not generally and loosely only, but with respect to every *jot and tittle.* The *personal conduct* of

the ruler is prescribed by the same laws which direct that of his fellow-citizens. These laws also it is his duty faithfully and scrupulously to obey: a duty enforced by higher obligations than those which respect men in general; because he is fairly supposed to understand more perfectly the duty and importance of obeying; and because, in violating law, his evil example will weaken the government, and prompt others to the same violation, more than that of any private individual. The ruler who violates the laws of the land, and yet attempts to compel or persuade others to obey them, labours with the Danaides, to fill with water a tub full of holes.

Concerning the king whom God foresaw the Israelites would one day elect to govern them, Moses, by his direction, says to Israel, *It shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests, the Levites; and it shall be with him; and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren; and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left.* Deut. xvii. 19, 20.

5. *A ruler ought to be a man of piety.*

That a ruler is bound to sustain this character by all the obligations which are incumbent on other men, will not be questioned. I intend something more. A ruler is under peculiar obligations to sustain this character, beside those which are common to other men. As a private citizen, he was under all the common obligations to sustain this character. As a ruler, he is under new ones. His duties are become more important and arduous; and demand, in an eminent degree, the blessing of God to enable him to perform them aright. He has greater means of doing good put into his hands, and needs, in a peculiar degree, the divine assistance to enable him to use them. If he should be left to unwise or wicked measures; they will be far more mischievous to his countrymen, than any thing which he could formerly have done when he was a private citizen. His personal conduct also cannot fail to be much more beneficial, or much more noxious, to his coun-

try, than if he had not been invested with a public character.

In accordance with these observations, the Scriptures inform us, that the rules of Israel and Judah were eminent blessings, or eminent curses, to the people over which they presided. David, Jehosaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, are remarkable examples of the glorious influence which a ruler may possess towards reforming a nation, and rendering it happy. Jeroboam and Ahab are terrible proofs of the power which a ruler may exert to change a nation into a horde of profligates. What magistrate, except such as Ahab and Jeroboam, would not covet the character and influence of the *four first* of these princes? What man of common sobriety would not shrink with horror from the thought of resembling the *two last?* But the four first were men of exemplary piety; while the two last were impious beyond example.

At the same time, God usually blesses a nation for the sake of pious rulers: whereas an impious one cannot fail to become a curse. But all blessings are given in answer to prayer. *Ask, and ye shall receive,* is the only promise of good to man; involving the condition without which it is never promised. If rulers then would obtain blessings, either for themselves or their people, they, like all other men, must pray for them. *But the sacrifice of the wicked,* and of wicked rulers as well as of other wicked men, *is an abomination to the Lord:* while *the prayer of the upright is his delight.* Which of these men ought we here to suppose that God will answer and bless?

6. *A ruler is bound to become a blessing by his example.*

The character of a good ruler is forcibly and perfectly described by St. Paul, when he styles him *a minister of God for good unto his people.* This is his whole business; and, while he pursues it, he is acting in his only proper character. To form this character, every thing which I have mentioned contributes as an essential part. But every thing which has been said, except what was observed concerning his personal obedience to the laws of the land and his piety, respects his official duties. The observation now to be illustrated respects his conduct as a man. As

a man, he is peculiarly required to be an example of all the Christian virtues. Whatever he does, others will do because he does it: and many more will imitate him, than if he were a private person. The weight of power, and the splendour of office, give to the example of the ruler, especially in an elevated station, an authority, a persuasiveness, a charm, which fascinates multitudes. If his example be virtuous, it will greatly discountenance and check vice; and greatly encourage, diffuse, and strengthen, virtue. If vicious, it will become pestilential; and spread contagion, decay, and death, through all around him. No man can be so great a blessing, or so great a curse, in this respect, as a ruler: and the example of every man in high office will invariably be either a public curse, or a public blessing. Jeroboam and Ahab were incomprehensible curses to the Israelites, through every succeeding age of their national existence. What man of common sense, in such an alternative, can balance a moment concerning the choice which he shall make?

7. *Every ruler, vested with the appointment of subordinate officers, is under indispensable obligations to select men of the very same character which has been already described.*

*Moreover thou shalt provide,* said Jethro to Moses, *out of all the people, able men; such as fear God; men of truth; hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of ten; and let them judge the people at all seasons. Judges and officers,* said Moses to the Israelites, *shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee throughout thy tribes; and they shall judge the people with just judgment. Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons; neither take a gift; for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. Him,* says David, speaking of this very subject, *him that hath a high look, and a proud heart, I will not suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land; that they may dwell with me; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.* These passages need no comment.

The voice of God has here determined this point in a manner which cannot be misunderstood.

With this decision exactly accords that of experience, and that of common sense. Subordinate officers are eyes, and ears, and hands, and feet, to their superiors in office. They are the means of furnishing them with the most necessary information; that of the wants, circumstances, dangers, and sufferings, of the nation; that of the real influence of government measures, whether beneficial or mischievous; and generally all that on which future regulations ought to be grounded. They are the immediate means of executing every law, and carrying into effect every measure of administration. Their own conduct, example, and influence, reach every neighbourhood, every fireside. Nations have almost always suffered incomparably more from a multitude of little tyrants, than from a single great one; and have been immensely more corrupted by a host of evil examples, than by a solitary pattern of wickedness, however great and splendid. In vain will the wisest, most upright, and most benevolent ruler labour to promote public happiness; if he commits the administration of his measures to profligates and villains. It is however to be remembered, that a ruler will of course appoint to subordinate offices men whose character corresponds with his own. A wise and good ruler, so far as his information extends, will choose none but wise and good men to aid him in the bnsiness of governing. A bad ruler will find none but bad assistants convenient for his purposes.

8. *A ruler is under the highest obligations to be industrious.*

Industry is the duty of all men, and pre-eminently that of a ruler. The various, complicated, and arduous business of governing, demands the full exertion of all the talents, and the full employment of all the time, allotted to man. Persons in high offices, particularly, are bound to improve their talents by every well-directed effort. They are under indispensable obligations to gain, so far as is in their power, the most enlarged and exact information of their official duties, and the best modes of discharging them; of the interests of the people and country over which they preside; of the means by which their rights may be most ef-

fectually secured; of the dangers, either at home or abroad, to which they are exposed, and of the ways in which those dangers may be averted; of the best means of private safety and national defence; and, in a word, of all those measures by which may be ensured the safety, peace, good order, and universal happiness, of the nation.

On this information ought to be founded a course of unremitted industry in effectuating, by the most useful measures, all these great and good purposes. A weak and ignorant ruler may deserve pity: a lazy one can only merit abhorrence. Both are, of course, public nuisances. When God was about to punish the Jews in a terrible manner for their sins, he announced the alarming judgment in this remarkable prediction: *Behold the* LORD, *the* LORD *of Hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem, and from Judah, the stay and the staff; the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; the mighty man, and the man of war; the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient: the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. And I will give children to be their princes; and babes shall rule over them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour. The child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable.* In the view of God therefore, the loss of wise and able rulers, and the government of weak and foolish ones, such as indolent men in office always are, are both terrible judgments upon a nation, and severe inflictions of the divine vengeance upon guilt of no common die.

# SERMON CXIV.

## FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

### DUTY OF SUBJECTS.

*Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* —EXOD. XX. 12.

IN the last discourse, I considered at some length *the duty of rulers.* I shall now go on to examine *that of subjects.* As a free government is that with which alone we have any practical concern, my observations will be especially referred to a government of this kind. All subjects have indeed many duties in common; but there are some which are peculiar to men living under despotic dominion. These I shall not think it necessary to particularize.

Every free government is more or less elective. The privilege of choosing those who are to govern them, is, to every people possessing it, a blessing of inestimable importance; and, like other blessings, brings with it the corresponding duties. Out of it particularly arises the

1. *Great duty of free citizens, which is to elect always, as far as may be, rulers possessing the several characteristics mentioned in the preceding discourse:* such as are sincere, just, benevolent, disposed to respect the laws of their country, pious, exemplary, industrious; and thus prepared to select for subordinate offices, whenever vested with the power of selecting, men of the same character.

That such rulers are agreeable to the will of God; and that he has required all rulers to be such; cannot be questioned. No more can it be questioned, that one great reason why he has required them to be of this character, is the establishment in this way of the happiness of the people whom they rule. In every ordinance of this nature, God

has directly consulted the happiness of his creatures; and has undoubtedly chosen the very best means of accomplishing it. The establishment of national happiness then demands indispensably, that rulers be of this character. But in the case supposed, the people themselves elect their rulers. They are therefore bound indispensably to elect such, and such only, as are agreeable to the will of God, as unfolded in his word; such, and such only, as will contribute directly to the establishment of public happiness.

Every people ought to remember, *that in this case the magistracy is of their own creation;* that just such men are introduced into it as they please; and that, if they are not men of wisdom and virtue, the electors are the sole and blameworthy cause. In the very act of electing weak and wicked men to places of magistracy, they testify publicly to God and the world, that they choose to have weak and wicked men for their rulers. All the evils of a weak and wicked administration of government are therefore chargeable, in the first instance, and in the prime degree, to themselves only. By what solemn obligations then are they bound to take the most effectual care, that those whom they elect be men of acknowledged wisdom and virtue! To choose men of the contrary character, is to rebel against the known will of God; to sport with their own happiness; and to hazard that of their posterity. The only part of this subject about which a question will be raised, and the part about which no question can, consistently either with the Scriptures or common sense, be ever raised, is the declaration, *that a ruler ought to be a virtuous man.* To the question concerning this subject the scriptural answer is short. *As a roaring lion, and a raging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.* This, it is to be remembered, is the decision, not of Solomon only, but of God. Common sense, directed by its own unerring rule of experience, has regularly given the same decision; and mustered before the eyes of mankind a long host of tyrants and public plunderers, of profligate legislators and abandoned magistrates, whose names have been followed by the hisses and loaded with the execrations of mankind. Virtuous rulers, on the contrary, have always, unless in times of peculiar violence and prejudice, been seen and acknowledged to be public blessings. Indeed it may be doubted whether the general

proposition now under consideration was ever seriously questioned by a sober man. All the doubts concerning it, all the opposition which it has met with, seem to have arisen in seasons of party and dissension; from the wish to carry some favourite point, or the desire of advancing to place and power some favourite person.

In the preceding discourse, I have illustrated this subject, in a summary manner, from *the political history of Judah and Israel recorded in the Scriptures.* This illustration, corresponding exactly with every other of the same nature, and in the light and conviction which it communicates, totally superior to them all, deserves to be resumed in this place, and to be insisted on particularly: much more particularly indeed than the present occasion will permit. Every virtuous prince of Judah was regularly a public blessing: beloved of his people; devoted to the advancement, and sedulously engaged in employing the means of accomplishing the actual and extensive advancement, of their happiness; the acknowledged object of peculiar divine favour; the cause in this manner for which peculiar blessings descended on his nation; and the honourable instrument of producing a sudden, general, and important reformation, not only in his court, but throughout his kingdom. Whenever such a prince ascended the throne, piety and morality immediately lifted up their heads, and began to find friends, to exert their influence, to abash vice, to silence murmurs, to diminish sufferings, and to create, what they always create, public and individual happiness. Such princes also regularly appointed, so far as it was in their power, men resembling themselves, to the subordinate offices of government; and thus stationed public benefactors in every corner of their country. For all these reasons, their names, as a sweet memorial, have been wafted down the stream of time, with distinction and honour, and have commanded the esteem of every succeeding generation. Such rulers were Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Deborah, Samuel, David, Solomon before his declension, Jehosaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Nehemiah. Such also were the brave and virtuous Maccabees. I shall only add, that these rulers strenuously defended the country which they governed.

Take now the reverse of this picture. The wicked princes, to whose dominion these nations were at times sub-

jected, blasted both their virtue and their happiness. Ahaz, Manasseh, Amon, and the three last kings of Judah, were malignant and affecting examples of this truth. Weak as well as wicked, these princes ruined their people at home, and provided no means for their defence against enemies abroad. With an unobstructed and terrible rapidity, the nation which they ruled slid down the steep of declension, and plunged suddenly into the gulf at the bottom.

Still more instructive is the account given us concerning the kings of Israel. Of Jeroboam, the first of these princes, the most dreadful of all characters is communicated to us in this remarkable declaration; that *he sinned, and made Israel to sin.* A polluted and profligate wretch himself, he converted all around him into profligates; and began a corruption of religion and morals which, extending its baleful influence through every succeeding age, terminated in the final ruin of his country. The evils introduced by him, operated with a commanding and universal efficacy; and they were cherished and promoted by Nadab his son, Baasha *his* murderer, Elah *his* son, and Zimri *his* murderer; and by Omri, Ahab, and every one who followed them. By their pestilential example, and under their deadly influence, the nation became abandoned. Truth, justice, and piety, sighed their last farewell to the reprobated race, and took their final flight. A nuisance to the world, and an object of the divine abhorrence, the unhappy nation became lost to every hope of recovery; and was finally given up as a prey to the Assyrian; at that time the general scourge and destroyer of mankind.

It is impossible for any people with its eyes open to wish for such rulers as these. When it is remembered, that this testimony concerning evil rulers is the testimony of God himself; that the same causes will always produce the same effects; and that evil rulers were no more injurious to Israel, than they will be to every other people governed by them; it is plain, that no people can elect such rulers without assuring themselves, that, in this very act, they are accomplishing their own ruin. A nation which elects wicked rulers, it ought ever to be remembered, is chargeable, not only with the guilt of being corrupted, as Israel was, but with the additional and peculiar guilt also of originat-

ing the means of its own corruption. It not only *becomes* wicked, *but makes itself wicked* by giving to evil men the power and influence which enable them to spread the plague of vice through every part of the political body. What man of common sense and sober reflection can consent to make himself chargeable with these evils?

But it may be said, that those who elect will often be unable to distinguish virtuous men from such as are not virtuous. I answer, that churches of Christ are also unable to make this discrimination with certainty; yet, wherever they are faithful and vigilant, they find no serious difficulty in keeping themselves, to a good degree, pure and safe from gross and unhappy mixtures. I answer farther, that a steady, regular aim, on the part of a whole nation, or other body politic, to choose virtuous rulers, and none but such as are virtuous, will ordinarily accomplish this invaluable purpose. Should it fail in any instance, the nation will still have done its duty. As to extreme cases; such as those in which no virtuous man can be found to fill the office contemplated; they must occur so rarely as hardly to require rules of direction. It will always be in the power of a people to select from the candidates the best man; and such a selection will undoubtedly answer the demands of duty in a case of this nature. The true difficulty does not lie in our inability to determine who are virtuous men; nor in their want of the proper qualifications for office; but in the want of a fixed and general determination to choose them; in our defective estimate of the importance of virtue to public office; in our preference of *other* qualifications to *this;* in party attachment; in personal favouritism; and in gross and guilty indifference to the public good. All these are deplorable prejudices, and palpable crimes; miserably weak, as well as dangerously sinful: fraught with innumerable evils, not always immediate perhaps, but always near, certain, and dreadful.

2. *Subjects are bound faithfully to obey their rulers.*

Concerning this truth, *in the abstract*, there will probably be no debate, except what is excited either by passion or by frenzy. The only serious questions, which can rationally be made here, are; *How far is this obedience to extend?* and, *What are the cases in which it may be lawfully*

*refused?* The importance of these questions must be deeply felt by every man. By St. Paul, *every soul* is required to *be subject to the higher powers;* because, as he informs us, *the powers that be are ordained of God.* By the same apostle we are farther told, that *whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and shall receive to himself damnation;* that is, not damnation in the proper sense, or as the word is now understood, but the condemnation denounced by the law of God against all sin. By St. Peter we are directed to *submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors,* that is, generally to all persons possessing lawful authority; *for such,* he declares, *is the will of God.* With these precepts in his hand, no Christian can fail to believe the questions mentioned above, to be of incalculable importance to him, and his fellow-men. It is as really the duty of a minister to explain this part of the gospel to his congregation, and to enforce upon them these precepts, as any other. Nor can he be at all excused in passing them by. I shall therefore exhibit to you, on the present occasion, my own views concerning this long and vehemently-disputed topic.

In the first place; *subjects are not bound to obey the commands of magistrates as such, when they are not warranted by law.*

The law creates magistrates; and defines all their powers and rights. Whenever they require that which is not warranted by law, they cease to act as magistrates; and return to the character of mere citizens. In this character they have plainly no authority over their fellow-citizens. It is not the *man,* but the *magistrate,* whom God requires us to obey.

Secondly. *Subjects are bound to obey magistrates, when acting agreeably to the laws, in all cases not contrary to the will of God as unfolded in the Scriptures.*

This I take to be the true import of the directions given by St. Peter and St. Paul. These apostles cannot I think be rationally supposed to enjoin upon subjects obedience to those commands of a ruler, which contravene the laws of the land; or which lie beyond the limits of his lawful authority. They require our obedience to the magistrate *acting*

*as a magistrate,* or within the limits of his lawful authority; and not to the magistrate *transgressing the bounds of law,* and acting merely as a private individual, according to the dictates of his own discretion, caprice, or whim. Much less can they be supposed to require our obedience to those commands of a ruler which are opposed to the law of God. Whether we should *obey God rather than men,* can never be seriously made a question by common sense any more than by piety.

There may be, there often are, cases in which, from motives of prudence and expediency, we may feel ourselves bound to obey magistrates, for the time at least, when acting beyond their authority, and aside from law. This subject is too extensive to be particularly considered on the present occasion. I shall only observe therefore, that we are bound to fix in our minds a high sense of the duty and importance of obeying rulers; and of the danger always threatening the public peace and prosperity from unnecessary disobedience. Such a sense will, it is believed, prevent most of the real difficulties to be apprehended in cases of this nature.

The observations already made concerning this general subject, will prepare the way for settling our opinions concerning a particular question involved in it, which is of high importance to mankind. It is this; *whether a nation is warranted to resist rulers when seriously encroaching on its liberties.* It is my intention to confine the answer which will now be given to this question, to *the lawfulness of such resistance. The expediency of it* I shall suppose to be granted, so far as the safety and success of the resistance are concerned. In other words, I shall suppose the people immediately interested in the question, to have as fair an opportunity as can be reasonably expected of preserving or acquiring political liberty; and of establishing, after the contest is ended, a free and happy government. In this case the resistance in question is, in my own view, warranted by the law of God. It is well known that this opinion has been adopted by some wise and good men, and denied by others. But the reasons alleged by both classes for their respective doctrines have, so far as they have fallen under my observation, been less satisfactory than I wished.

A nation already free ought, whenever encroachments upon its freedom are begun, to reason in some such manner as the following:

"*Despotism, according to the universal and uniform experience of man, has regularly been fatal to every human interest.* It has attacked private happiness, and invaded public prosperity. It has multiplied sufferings without number, and beyond degree. It has visited regularly the nation, the neighbourhood, and the fireside; and carried with it public sorrow and private anguish. Personal liberty has withered at its touch: and national safety, peace, and prosperity, have faded at its approach. Enjoyment has fled before it; life expired; and hope vanished. Evils of this magnitude have all been suffered also, merely to gratify the caprice, the pride, the ambition, the avarice, the resentment, or the voluptuousness, of one or a few individuals; each of whose interests is of the same value in the sight of God, and no more than those of every other individual belonging to the nation. Can there be a reason; do the Scriptures furnish one; why the millions of the present generation, and the more numerous millions of succeeding generations, should suffer these evils, merely to gratify the lusts of ten, twenty, or one hundred, of their fellow-men?

"If an affirmative answer should be given to this question; let it be remembered, that *the same despotic power has, with equal regularity, cut off from subjects the means of usefulness and duty.* Mankind are sent into the world, to serve God, and do good to each other. If these things are not done; we live in vain, and worse than in vain. If the means of doing them are taken away; we are prevented, just so far, from answering the end of our creation. In vain is mental and bodily energy, in vain are talents, opportunities, and privileges, bestowed by our Creator, if they are to be wrested from us by our fellow-men; or the means of exerting them taken away. In vain are we constituted parents, if we are precluded from procuring the comfortable sustenance, providing for the education, and promoting the piety and salvation, of our offspring. In vain are we made children, if we are forbidden to perform the filial duties. In vain are we placed in the other relations of life, if we are prohibited from performing the duties to which they

give birth. Take away usefulness from man, and there is nothing left which is good; but every thing which is bad. This usefulness however despots have, in a dreadful manner, either prevented or destroyed. They have shrunk the talents, and palsied the energy, of the mind; have shut the door of knowledge, and blocked up the path of virtue; have wilted the human race into sloth and imbecility, and lowered the powers of man almost to the level of brutism. *The little spot of Greece* exhibited more energy, and more specimens of mental greatness, in one hundred and fifty years, than the *Chinesian world* has exhibited in two thousand.

"But this is not all. *Despotic rulers have exercised a most malignant influence upon the virtue of mankind.* They have assumed the prerogatives of Heaven; and prescribed, as the will of God, a system of religious doctrines and duties to their subjects. This system has invariably been absurd, gross, and monstrous. The morality which it has enjoined, has been chiefly a code of crimes, fitter for the regulation of banditti, than of sober men. The religion which it has taught, has been a scheme of impiety. Yet this system they have enforced by the most terrible penalties; by the loss of property, liberty, and life; by the jail and the gibbet, the wheel and the rack, the fagot and the cross. Blood has stained the sceptre; martyrs have surrounded the throne.

"Even this is not all. *Despots, bad men themselves, must be served by bad men.* The baleful and deleterious influence of the head and the members united, has extended every where; even to the corner and the cottage; and, like the deadly damp of the cavern, has imperceptibly and silently extinguished light and life wherever it has spread. Virtue has fallen amid the exhalation unobserved and unknown. In its place has arisen and flourished a train of monstrous corruptions, which, with continually increasing strength, have finally gained an entire possession of the land. Degenerated beyond recall, and polluted beyond hope, a people under this influence has sunk into remediless ruin; and only continued to exist, until mercy was wearied out by their profligacy, and reluctantly gave the sign for vengeance to sweep them away. One regular and complete example of all these evils, is given us by the voice of God himself in

the kingdom of Israel. Profane history records a multitude. Is there any principle, either scriptural or rational, which demands of any nation such a sacrifice?

"But were we to admit that such a sacrifice might lawfully be made by us, *so far as ourselves only are concerned*, it is farther to be remembered, that *we are intrusted with all the possessions, privileges, blessings, and hopes, of our offspring, through every succeeding generation.* Guardians appointed by God himself, how can we fail of discharging punctiliously this sacred trust? The deposit is of value literally immense. It involves the education, the comfort, the safety, the usefulness, the religious system, the morals, the piety, and the eternal life, of millions which can neither be known nor calculated. This is a trust which cannot lawfully be given up, unless in obedience to a known and unquestionable command of God: and no such command can be pleaded. Equally important is it, that we prevent (for under God none but we can prevent) the contrary, innumerable, and immeasurable evils.

"At the same time, it is ever to be remembered, that under a free government, all the blessings which I have mentioned, so far as they are found in the present world, live and prosper. Such a government is the soil and the climate, the rain and the sunshine, of human good. Despotism, on the contrary, is the combined drought and sterility of Nubia, the frost and darkness of Zembla; amid which virtue, comfort, and safety, can never spring."

With these considerations in view, it is unquestionably evident to me, that nations are bound, so far as it is possible, to maintain their freedom, and to resist every serious encroachment upon it with such efforts as are necessary for its preservation.

Thirdly. *Subjects are bound to obey every magistrate acting lawfully in the same manner.*

The constable and tithing-man are, in their own sphere, as truly armed with the authority of the state, as the governor and the prince: and the divine command is, *Submit to every ordinance of man*, that is, to governmental authority in every department, *for the Lord's sake.* To resist rulers in *high* stations, may be productive of more mischief than

to resist those in *low* ones. In other respects the guilt of the resistance is the same.

3. *Subjects are bound to honour their rulers.*

*They are bound to treat them with all the becoming marks of respect and reverence.* Rulers, when treated with little external respect, will soon cease to be respected.

*They are bound to support them honourably.* This is one of the few doctrines in which all ages and nations have united. Avarice alone has in any case prompted men to believe the contrary doctrine, or hindered them from carrying *this* into proper execution. An honourable support to rulers, is that which the general sense of propriety pronounces to be of this nature.

*Subjects are bound also to speak respectfully of their rulers.* On this subject it will be necessary to be somewhat more particular.

*Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people,* is certainly a precept dictated by reason, as well as revelation. Still it cannot, I think, be denied, that the faults of rulers are, on certain occasions, to be exposed, as well as those of private individuals. The prophets frequently exposed the faults of their rulers; and Christ and his apostles, those of the magistrates of their day. The question, when and in what manner this may be done by us, becomes therefore a serious topic of investigation.

Concerning this subject the following thoughts have occurred to me.

First. *Censures of rulers, in order to be lawful, must be true.*

Secondly. *There must be a real and solid reason for uttering them.* It is not enough, that a ruler has done evil. In order to be justified in publishing it, we must be assured that some important good will, with high probability, spring from the publication. The evil arising from this source is, in the abstract, always real and important. Where there is no good sufficiently probable, and sufficiently important to balance this evil, we cannot be vindicated in bringing it into existence.

Thirdly. *We must sincerely aim at doing this good.*

A watchful and faithful determination of this kind, ac-

companied by a scrupulous and conscientious sense of its high importance as a part of our duty, will ordinarily preserve us from the danger of transgression. He who in the proper and evangelical manner has formed such a determination, and made it an habitual part of his character, will almost always perform his duty with respect to this subject; and rarely or never censure a ruler, unless on solid grounds.

Fourthly. *Such censures should, in all ordinary cases, be uttered in the language of moderation, and not of invective or ridicule.*

A great part of the evils done in this way, flow from *the manner in which the censure is conducted.* Where this is sober and temperate, there is usually little room to fear. Where it is not, the censurer is always exposed to the danger of criminality.

4. *Subjects are bound to defend their rulers.*

This duty equally includes opposition to private and civil violence, and resistance to open hostility; and is so obvious and acknowledged, as to need no illustration. In defending their rulers, subjects are only employed in ultimately defending themselves.

5. *Subjects are bound to furnish all necessary supplies for the exigences of government.*

*For this cause,* says St. Paul, that is, *for conscience' sake, pay ye tribute also. For they,* that is rulers, *are God's ministers; attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, and custom to whom custom.* Taxes are ordinarily the only national supplies. Every public object almost demands some expense, in peace not a little, in war much more. If the necessary supplies be not furnished, these objects must either languish or fail. God has therefore wisely and benevolently required mankind to render tribute and custom, when lawfully demanded. It is to be remembered, that this requisition is made by infinite authority: and can no more be dispensed with than any other command of God.

6. *Subjects are bound to pray for their rulers.*

To the performance of this duty no virtuous subject can ever want motives. The arduous nature of those duties to which rulers are called; the responsibility of their sta-

tions; the difficulties which they have to encounter; and the discouragements under which they labour; teach us, in the strongest manner, that they daily and eminently need the divine blessing. This blessing, like all others, will be given only in answer to prayer; to the prayers indeed of the rulers themselves; and still more to the united prayers of both rulers and people. Mere benevolence then, mere compassion for men struggling with peculiar difficulties in their behalf, demands this duty from subjects.

At the same time, it is loudly called for by the regard which we owe to the public welfare. National blessings are given in answer to national prayers. Of these blessings rulers are the chief instruments. But they cannot be the means of good to a nation, unless their efforts are crowned with the divine blessing. If nations then would receive public blessings; they are bound indispensably to supplicate for their rulers the favour of God.

Finally, God has required such prayers at our hands. *I exhort therefore*, says St. Paul, *that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty, for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.*

The only remark which I shall annex to this discourse is, *that, connected with the preceding one, it shews unanswerably the groundlessness and folly of an observation repeated proverbially by multitudes of men in this and other countries;* viz. *that religion has nothing to do with politics, or, in other words, with government.*"

These discourses summarily, as the subjects of them have been considered, prove, beyond all reasonable debate, that the whole vindicable conduct of rulers towards their subjects, and of subjects towards their rulers, is nothing but a mere collection of duties, objects of moral obligation required by God, and indispensably owed to him by men. The Christian religion therefore, the rule of all duty, and involving all moral obligation, is so far from having nothing to do with this subject, that it is inseparably interwoven with every part of it. Accordingly the Bible regulates, and, were it not sinfully prevented from its proper influence, would exactly and entirely control, all the political doctrines and actions

of men. It is indeed as easy and as common to deny truth, and refuse to perform our duty, to disobey God and injure men, in political concerns, as in any other. In truth, there has been no field of iniquity more extensive than this: none in which more enormous crimes or more terrible sufferings have existed. All these crimes and sufferings have sprung from the ignorance or the disobedience of the Scriptures. Were *they* allowed to govern the political conduct of mankind; both the crimes and the sufferings would vanish; every duty both of rulers and subjects would be performed; and every interest would be completely secured. In what manner the doctrine against which I am contending ever came to be received by any man who was not peculiarly weak or wicked, I am at a loss to determine. It would seem, that even the careless and gross examination of the most heedless reflector must have evinced both its folly and falsehood. A dream is not more unfounded: the decisions of frenzy are not more wild. To villains in power, or in pursuit of power, office, and public plunder, it is undoubtedly a most convenient doctrine; as it will quiet the reproaches of conscience, where conscience has not ceased to reproach; and throw the gate, which opens to every crime and selfish gratification, from its hinges. To subjects, to a state, to a nation, it is literally fatal. The people which have adopted it, may be certainly pronounced to have bidden a final adieu to its peace and its happiness, its virtue and its safety.

## SERMON CXV.

### SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

### KILLING; WHEN LAWFUL, AND WHEN UNLAWFUL.

*Thou shalt not kill.*—EXOD. XX. 13.

In the five preceding discourses, I have considered summarily *several classes of duties involved in the fifth command.* Had I no other object before me beside the exami-

nation of this precept, I should feel myself obliged to investigate also the mutual duties of men, in various other relations of life; particularly those of husbands and wives, masters and servants, ministers and their congregations. All these, together with the duties of friends and neighbours, of the aged and the young, are, I think, obviously included in this precept; and are of sufficient importance to claim, not only a discussion, but a more extensive and minute investigation, than I have given to those already examined. But a work of this nature, although it may seem large, must necessarily be compendious. The field is too vast, even to be wandered over by any single effort; and many parts of it must be left unexplored by any traveller.

The command which is given us in the text, is expresed in the most absolute manner: *Thou shalt not kill. To kill* is the thing forbidden; and by the words it is forbidden in all cases whatever. Whenever we kill any living creature therefore, we are guilty of a transgression of this command; unless we are permitted to take away the life in question *by an exception which God himself has made to the rule.*

This consideration, of *the absolute universality* of the command in the text, ought invariably to be remembered in all our comments upon it. These, it is ever to be remembered, are the words which God himself has chosen. They accord, therefore, with the dictates of infinite wisdom concerning this subject; and bind us with infinite authority. Man cannot alter them. Man cannot lawfully originate an exception to them, nor in any other manner limit their import. Every comment upon them must, of course, be derived from the words themselves; or from other precepts; or from comments on this precept found in other parts of the Scriptures. At the same time, a scrupulous attention to the words themselves will, if I mistake not, remove several difficulties concerning this subject, and contribute not a little towards settling finally some important doctrines of morality.

In examining this subject I shall endeavour to point out,

I. *Those instances, in which life may be lawfully taken away, agreeably to scriptural exceptions under this law;*

II. *Some of those instances in which life is destroyed in contradiction to this law.*

I. *I shall mention those instances in which life may be lawfully taken away under scriptural exceptions to this law.*

1. *The life of animals may be lawfully taken away in two cases; when they are necessary for our food; and when they are hostile and dangerous to us.*

In Genesis ix. 3, *God said to Noah and his sons, Every thing that moveth shall be meat for you: even as the green herb have I given you all things.* That this permission was necessary we know, because it was given. But if it was necessary, men had no right to eat the flesh of animals before it was given. The same thing is evident also from the terms of the permission, *Even as the green herb have I given you all things.* If God gave men all things, that is, all animals to be their food; then men have no original, natural, or previous right to use them for food. Accordingly, the antediluvians, abandoned as they were, appear plainly never to have eaten animal food. Noah and his descendants began this practice under this permission. Here is found the only right of mankind to this food. Animals belonged originally and solely to their Creator. We, therefore, could have no right to their lives, unless he, who alone possessed that right, had transferred it to us.

From these observations it is plain, that infidels, who deny the divine revelation of the Scriptures, can plead no right to eat the flesh of animals. The only being who can possibly communicate this right to us, is God: since he is the only being who possesses the right to dispose of them. But God has no where communicated this right to mankind, unless he has done it in the Scriptures. But this communication they deny to have been made; and are therefore without any warrant for the use of animal food. Nor can they ever make use of it, without contravening the dictates of a good conscience, and violating the plainest principles of justice and humanity.

The arguments by which infidels have endeavoured to defend this conduct in themselves, are, in my view, miserable fetches of a disingenuous mind, struggling hard to justify itself in a practice which it is loath to give up; and not the honest reasons of fair conviction. They are these.

"It is the analogy of nature, that the stronger should prey upon the weaker: that we feed animals, and have therefore a right to their lives and their flesh, as a retribution for our kindness to them: and that, if *we* did not destroy *them*, they would multiply in such a manner, as ultimately to destroy *us*."

These reasons are characteristically suited to the mouth of a *wolf* or a *tiger*; but proceed with a very ill grace from the mouth of a *man*. Were a savage of superior force, to attack an infidel, plunder his property, and destroy his life, in order to convert his flesh into food; and were he beforehand to allege, as the justifying reason for this conduct, that it was the analogy of nature for the stronger to prey upon the weaker: the argument, it is believed, would scarcely satisfy the infidel. Were the *ox* endued with speech, he might unanswerably reply to the allegation, drawn from the kindness of men to oxen, that their labour was an ample compensation for their food; and that men fed them for their own benefit, and not theirs. With respect to the third argument, he might ask, without fearing any reply; Where and when did oxen ever multiply in such a manner, as to become dangerous to mankind? If infidels can be satisfied with these arguments for the use of flesh; we can no longer wonder, that they are equally well satisfied with similar arguments against the revelation of the Scriptures.

The truth is: they are not thus satisfied with either the one or the other. Inclination, and not conviction, is probably the source of their conduct in both cases. Were they as scrupulous as all men ought to be; they would, like the Hindoos, and even the antediluvians, abstain entirely from eating the flesh of animals.

Animals, hostile and dangerous to men, God has not only permitted, but commanded us to put to death; at least, whenever they have intentionally destroyed human life. In Genesis ix. he says to Noah and his children, *Surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it; and at the hand of man.* Agreeably to this law, which makes animals in this situation punishable with death, the *ox*, *which gored a man or woman*, was commanded to *be stoned*. As the beast

which had perpetrated this act could be punished only by men, men were required to put him to death. It will not, I suppose, be contended, that we are not warranted to anticipate this mischief, and prevent the tiger from shedding human blood, as well as to destroy him after his depredations are completed.

In all other cases we are unwarranted to take away the life of animals, because God has given us no warrant.

There are persons who destroy their domestic animals, by compelling them to labour beyond their strength, or their capacity of enduring their fatigue. There are others who beat them, under the influence of furious passions, in immoderate degrees; or afflict them by other exertions of violence and cruelty. There are others who deny them the necessary food, and keep them continually half famished through hunger. There are others who take away the lives of birds, fishes, and other small animals, for the mere purpose of indulging the pleasure of hunting or fishing. And there are others still, who find an inhuman pleasure in merely distressing and torturing this humble and defenceless class of creatures. Of the first of these modes of cruelty, horse-racing is a scandalous example. A brutal specimen of the last is presented to us in cock-fighting.

*A righteous man*, says Solomon, *regardeth the life of his beast;* Proverbs xii. 10: that is, a righteous man realizes, in a just manner, the value of the life of his beast, entertains a steady conviction, that he has no right unnecessarily to shorten or embitter it; and feels the solemn obligation which he is under, to use all the means, dictated by humanity and prudence, for preserving the life of those animals which are under his care, and for rendering them comfortable.

In all these instances of cruelty, the life of animals is not immediately taken away. But in all of them it is either suddenly or gradually destroyed; and often with greater cruelty, and more abominable wickedness, where the process is slow, than where it is summary. The spirit of this command is violated in them all.

Children, who are either taught or permitted to exercise cruelty towards animals in early life, are efficaciously fitted in this manner to exercise cruelty towards their fellow-

men. If they escape the dungeon or the gibbet, they will be little indebted for this privilege to those who had the charge of their education. It is remarkable, that the law which punished murder with death, was immediately subjoined to the permission to take the life and eat the flesh of animals. In this fact, if I mistake not, the Creator has taught us, that the transition from shedding *their* blood to shedding *that of man*, is so short and obvious, as to render a new law necessary for the prevention of murder; a law which it would seem had not been demanded by the circumstances of preceding ages.

2. *The life of man may also be lawfully taken away, in certain cases, according to the Scriptures.*

*This may be done,* in the first place, *when this act is necessary for our own defence.* A sufficient warrant for this is given us *in the case of the thief* mentioned Exodus xxii. 2. *If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die; there shall no blood be shed for* HIM. In this case, the thief was killed in the defence of a man and his family; and the act of killing him is plainly warranted. By parity of reason the warrant extends to all cases which in substance compare with this. In other words, we are justified in putting to death the person who assails the life of ourselves and others wrongfully, whenever our own defence or theirs makes it necessary.

In every case of this nature, we are however indispensably bound to be sure, that we act only in the defence of ourselves or others; and that there are no perceptible means, beside this extreme one, of warding off the threatened evil. Wherever such means exist, it is our indispensable duty to employ them. We are bound also in no case to take away life for an injury already done; and in the indulgence of anger, malice, or revenge. At the same time, if the right invaded, or the injury to be done, is of moderate importance; we are prohibited from proceeding to this extremity.

*On this ground alone, that it is an act of self-defence,* can *war be justified.* Aggressive war is nothing but a complication of robbery and murder. Defensive war is merely the united efforts of several persons to defend themselves against a common inroad or enemy. It is therefore

equally lawful with self-defence in an individual. By aggressive war here I do not intend that, which is first commenced under the name of war; but the original outrage, or series of outrages, out of which the war has lawfully arisen on the part of the injured nation.

A numerous, and on many accounts respectable, class of Christians, the *Friends*, have denied the lawfulness of war. It is to be wished that the world would universally adopt the practice of these pacific men. But so long as the present disposition of mankind predominates; so long as men will attack and destroy the life, liberty, and property, of their fellow-men; defensive war is absolutely necessary, and absolutely lawful. A nation which should adopt the contrary doctrine would be undone. *This society of Christians could not possibly exist in a national state.* The province of Pennsylvania, and perhaps the rest of the British colonies together with it, came very near being finally destroyed by the prevalence of this very doctrine in it house of representatives. Such a nation would publicly proclaim itself an unresisting prey to the rest of mankind; and, like the deer, would become a victim to the fangs of the wolf and tiger.

*That war is lawful in the abstract* we know with certainty; because it has been directly commanded, unequivocally approved, and miraculously prospered, by God. He commanded Israel to make war upon Amelek, until the name of that guilty nation should be blotted out from under heaven. In the same manner he commanded them to make war upon the inhabitants of Canaan; and approved of their conduct in making war upon that people. In the same manner, he commanded the Israelites to make war repeatedly upon Midian and upon Hazor; censured the tribe of Reuben, and by his angel commanded the Israelites, to *curse Meroz*, because they neglected or refused to make active exertions in this war. He also miraculously aided the Israelites against Midian, Amalek, the Philistines, and others. See Exodus xvii. 8; Judges vii; 1 Samuel vii; and 2 Samuel v.

But all that has been commanded, approved, and miraculously prospered, by God, is in itself right. For it is impossible that God should either command or approve

of that which is wrong. The only question therefore, which can be rationally made in this case, is, *In what circumstances is war lawful?* With this question it cannot be supposed, that I have here any concern.

Secondly. *The life of man may be lawfully taken away, when by crimes it has been forfeited to the law of the land.*

Mankind are commanded, in the original law concerning murder given us in Gen. ix, to put the murderer to death. *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.* In the Mosaic code the same punishment is annexed to a variety of crimes; such as adultery, filial stubbornness, idolatry, and several others. In each of these cases men are *required* to take away human life, as the proper punishment of a crime, by which it has been forfeited; and are not merely *warranted to do this by a permission.* In the former case, the command is addressed to all men. Accordingly we find it repeated by Solomon, as a universal precept, in the most absolute terms. *A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person,* he *shall flee to the pit: let no man stay him.* It is also made a part of the Jewish law in various places. Exodus xxi. 12. 14; Lev. xxiv. 17; and very comprehensively, Numb. xxxv. 16, &c. In the latter cases the command is addressed to the Israelites. The Jewish law is binding upon other nations only in those cases whose nature is unchangeable and universal; or in those in which the circumstances are precisely the same. Still this law is a complete proof of the absolute rectitude of that conduct which it prescribes. For God cannot possibly prescribe that which is wrong. The same law also teaches, that, in the same circumstances, the same conduct may, with the strictest propriety, be pursued by *us.* For God cannot command that which in the given circumstances is unwise. It is evidently lawful therefore, for other nations as well as the Jews, to put men to death for other crimes beside murder.

But in every case of this nature, we are, in my view, forbidden by the general spirit of the gospel, and, as I apprehend, by the plain dictates of reason also, to take away life wherever a milder punishment may be safely substituted. Murder we are bound invariably to punish with death. For every other crime, a milder penalty may, and ought to

be, adopted, whenever it will answer the proper ends of punishment. All evils which are suffered beyond the necessary purposes of penal jurisprudence, are suffered gratuitously; or, in other words, without any justifying cause. In this case the infliction ceases to be justice, and becomes oppression.

It is ever to be remembered, that, even when the punishment of death is lawfully to be inflicted, it can be warrantably executed only by the magistrate; and by him only when acting according to the decisions of law. Private individuals have no more right to interfere, than if the man condemned were innocent; and were they to lay violent hands on him, although proved to be guilty, and rightfully condemned, they would themselves become murderers. Nor can the judge lawfully condemn any man, whatever he may think concerning the rectitude of the decision, unless upon adequate legal testimony, fairly exhibited in open court, and in exact conformity to the modes of trial by law established. Neither can the executive magistrate warrantably do any thing in a case of this nature, beside merely executing the sentence of the judge, whether he esteems that sentence just or unjust. The time, the manner, and the circumstances, of execution, ordered by law, he is bound exactly to observe. A criminal, although condemned to death, may, instead of being executed, be murdered; and that as truly as any other man. The sheriff also can easily lay aside the character of a magistrate, and assume that of a murderer.

At the same time, all magistrates, in whatever station they act, are indispensably prohibited from the exercise of hatred or revenge, in every form and degree, against the criminal. Magistrates here, as well as elsewhere, are *ministers of God for good to his people.* In the awful employment of executing penal justice, it is their unalterable duty to exercise the benevolence of the gospel; to be exactly just and faithful; and to *rule in the fear of God.* As instruments in his hand, disposed conscientiously to do that, and that only, which is required by his will, and demanded by the public safety, they will be approved by him; and ought ever to be highly honoured by their fellow-citizens. But, if they turn aside from their duty, and indulge

their own passions instead of obeying the dictates of public justice, they assume the character of oppressors, and lay aside that of rulers; merit the severest censures of their fellow-men; and prepare a terrible account of their *stewardship* against the final day.

II. *I shall mention several instances in which life is destroyed in contradiction to this command.*

*Of these, the only one which I shall mention at the present time, is that which is appropriately called murder; usually defined to be killing our neighbour with premeditated malice.*

On this subject, so long, so often, and so thoroughly, canvassed, so perfectly understood, and so harmoniously considered, by mankind, it cannot be necessary to dwell. I shall dismiss it therefore with this single observation; that the very necessity of forbidding this crime, a necessity daily and unanswerably manifested, is a most dreadful proof of the excessive depravity of man.

I shall now proceed to make several observations, more necessary and more instructive to this audience, concerning several crimes more or less intimately connected with this subject.

First. *All those actions which involve murder, are undoubtedly of the same nature.*

Such are the burning of a house, supposed by the incendiary to be inhabited; making a dangerous leak in a ship having men on board; shooting, or casting the instruments of death, into a crowd; treason; rebellion; and other acts of a similar nature. It is to no purpose here for the perpetrator to allege, that death may possibly not be the consequence of his nefarious conduct. Had he any other regard to the value of human life, and to the sacred obligation which he is under, not only not to invade, but to preserve it, beside what a murderer feels; he would never be guilty of the conduct, nor think of this reason as a justification of it. A bare possibility of this nature must be alleged, if alleged at all, not to convince, but to affront, the understanding.

Secondly. *Under this head are also included, all those actions by which the life of man is destroyed through criminal negligence.*

There are many cases in which we may easily foresee, that the death of others will be a consequence of our negligence. A sacred regard to the value of human life, duly felt by us, would necessarily produce that attentive care, which, so far as is in our power, would ensure safety to the lives of our fellow-men.

Thirdly. *To contrive the death of others, is a crime of the same general nature.* The crime of murder lies in the dispositions and designs of the heart. To constitute us murderers in the sight of God, it is not necessary that we should *be guilty of any overt act whatever. It is amply sufficient to contrive the death of others.* So plain is this truth, that it has been generally acknowledged by mankind. The real and the prime guilt, probably almost always, lies here. The providence of God not unfrequently prevents the contrivance from being executed. But the contriver is still a murderer in his sight.

Fourthly. *To wish the death of others, although we form no plans for accomplishing it, is a crime of the same general nature.*

*He who looketh on a woman to lust after her,* saith our Saviour, *hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* By parity of reason, wishes indulged against the life of our neighbour, are the commission of murder. There are probably many persons who secretly wish the death of their fellow-men, and who yet never form, nor think of forming, any plan to accomplish their death. Most, if not all, of these, perhaps, feel little remorse at the remembrance of their conduct; and probably rarely suspect themselves of being even remotely concerned in transgressing this command. Every such person is grossly deceived; and will be found charged with the guilt of murder at the final judgment.

Fifthly. *To wound our neighbour, and deprive him of the use of his limbs or faculties, is a crime of the same nature;* though, I acknowledge, *of inferior guilt.*

Although to destroy another's limbs is not take away his life; it is yet to take away a part of the usefulness and comfort which make life desirable. We may continue to live, when we are rendered chiefly useless and unhappy. But life itself, so far as this world is concerned, must be

of little value to the possessor. Nor can it easily be believed, that he, whose malevolence can be gratified by depriving his neighbour of his limbs, or other peculiarly important blessings, would, under a little additional provocation, be reluctant to take his life.

Sixthly. *Quarrelling and fighting are crimes evidently of the same nature.*

A great part of the murders committed in this world, are merely the conclusions or catastrophes of these crimes. So evident is this, that nothing is more common, with respect to an existing quarrel, than to hear the persons who mention it, express their apprehensions that it may terminate in murder. Indeed, the spirit which begets contentions of this nature, is only an inferior degree of that which malignantly destroys the life of man. *The beginning of strife*, says Solomon, *is as when one letteth out water:* an evil, the degree, the mischiefs, and the end, of which can never be anticipated by the human mind.

Seventhly. *All violent, unreasonable anger, envy, and hatred, are evils of the same nature.*

Christ, in commenting on the sixth command, says, *Whosoever shall be angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool,* or, as Doddridge seems inclined to render it, "*Thou villain,*" *shall be in danger of hell-fire.* St. John, in a manner more summary, and still more explicit, observes, *He that hateth his brother is a murderer.* From these passages it is evident, that all the several things which I have considered as involved in the general crime of murder, or as acts of disobedience to this precept, are actually of this general nature. They are not, indeed, all marked with the same malignity as the crime usually known by this name. But they all partake of the same nature; and are either murder in the proper sense, or steps which lead directly to it; seeds impregnated with that very poison, which, more perfectly concocted in the future growth of the plant, becomes so rank and so fatal to the life of man.

Finally. *I hesitate not to pronounce that unkindness, which*

*especially when exercised towards inferiors and dependants, wears upon the spirits, and often breaks the heart of our fellow-creatures, to be a crime of the same nature.*

In order to shorten human life, it is not necessary to use a bludgeon nor a pistol. Servants may easily be brought to an untimely grave, by stinting them with respect to their necessary food, clothes, lodging, or fuel; or by a repetition of tasks unreasonably burdensome. A delicate and susceptible child may be easily driven into a consumption by parental coldness, fretfulness, severity, the denial of necessary indulgences, or the exaction of undue compliances. Mere conjugal indifference may easily break the heart of an affectionate wife. Faithless friendship may destroy at once the life of a friend. Ungrateful subjects have shortened the life of an affectionate ruler, by their ingratitude merely. Rulers have probably, in millions of instances, put their subjects to death, without any immediate violence, by the gradual but sure operations of a comprehensive and hard-handed oppression.

From these observations it is evident, that murder, in the proper sense, is begun in unkindness; and that unkindness is begun in the early and unrestrained indulgence of human passions. This indulgence, therefore, parents, and all other guardians of children, are bound faithfully to restrain from the beginning. The first tendencies towards cruelty, the first evidences of an unfeeling disposition, should be repressed, discouraged, and, as far as may be, destroyed. Tenderness, on the contrary, a spirit of general benevolence, and an active, affectionate beneficence to others, should be cultivated in every child with care, sedulousness, and constancy, resembling that with which an impassioned florist watches, nurses, and cherishes, a choice flower; procured with great expense from a distant climate; his own favourite possession; pre-eminent for its fragrance and beauty; and regarded by him as the pride and boast of the country in which he lives.

# SERMON CXVI.

## SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

### DUELLING.

*Thou shalt not kill.*—EXOD. XX. 13.

IN the preceding discourse, from these words, I proposed to point out,

I. *Those instances in which life may be lawfully taken away, agreeably to scriptural exceptions under this law;*

II. *Some of those instances in which life is destroyed in contradiction to this law.*

The first of these heads I discussed at that time; and made several observations under the second. The remaining subjects included in this division, are, *duelling, suicide,* and *drunkenness*... The first of these, *viz.* duelling, shall be the topic of immediate investigation.

That duelling is a violation of the command in the text is evident,

1. *From the words of the precept itself;*

*Thou shalt not kill.*

I have already observed, that these words contain a command entirely absolute, without either condition or exception. I also observed, that, as this is a command of God, man cannot, without impious presumption, attempt to limit it; and that no other exceptions therefore can be made to it, beside those which God himself has made. But God has made no exception which the most ingeniousmind can so construe, as to render it, even in the most remote degree, favourable to duelling. As this assertion will neither be denied nor doubted; it will only be necessary to add, that this precept stands in full force against duelling, and that every duel is a gross violation of its whole authority.

Nor is this all. Duelling is a violation of this precept,

of the very worst kind; superior in its guilt to most other crimes of the same nature, and inferior to none. For,

2. *A duel is always the result of a design to take away human life.*

I say *always*. It is not however my intention to deny, that there may be exceptions to this general declaration. But these are probably as few, as to any general rule concerning human conduct. The challenge originally contains a proposition to kill, or to be killed. It is accepted with an expectation of killing, or of being killed. Each of the combatants also takes his aim at the seat of life, and intends to destroy his antagonist if he can. No pretence therefore is more unfounded, than that duellists do not design to kill each other.

3. *Duelling always involves efforts to destroy life.*

The weapons used in it, are always the proper instruments of death; and they are used with the utmost skill and care which the parties possess, for the direct purpose of producing this dreadful catastrophe.

4. *Men are put to death in duels with more deliberation, than in almost any other case whatever.*

The challenger has always ample opportunity to deliberate before he gives the challenge. This opportunity also, it is reasonably supposed, he extends as far as he pleases; both because the case is of the utmost importance to himself, and because he manages it according to his own choice. To him it is entirely optional, whether he will fight at all; and when he has determined this point, at what time he shall give the challenge. Whatever time therefore he chooses to take for consideration, he actually takes; and this he himself will not deny to be a sufficient time. During this period also, the subject being of the highest importance, and necessarily making the strongest impressions, must be often, if not always, in his mind; must therefore be viewed in its various lights; and must receive all the examination which such a mind is capable of giving to subjects of the highest consequence. Of course, a duel is invariably the result, if it be not the challenger's own fault, of the most ample deliberation. It must be his own fault also, if this deliberation be not cool and thorough. All

these observations, it is to be remembered, are applicable with the same force to the person challenged.

5. *Duelling is probably always perpetrated with a spirit of revenge.*

I say, *probably always.* For that this is usually the fact, no sober man can doubt for a moment. To me it seems inconceivable, that any man, whatever may have been his feelings in the earlier parts of this transaction, should go into the field, and employ himself in the several measures adopted by duellists for the purpose of taking away each other's lives; and not be under the influence of predominating passions. These passions can be no other than hatred and revenge. If we trace this subject with even a moderate degree of attention, from its commencement to its close; it will, I think, be impossible for us to adopt any other opinion. The challenger receives, or at least believes himself to have received, an injury (of what kind is a matter of perfect indifference) sufficiently great to demand of him the exposure of his own life to probable destruction; and the death, so far as he is able to compass it, of the injurer. Now, let me ask, and let every sober man answer the question, whether an injury, felt to be of this magnitude, was ever regarded, or can possibly be regarded, by such men as duellists always are, without strong feelings of wrath and revenge? Duellists, every one knows, are men pre-eminently proud, haughty, insolent, and proverbially irritable; jealous to an extreme of what they call their own rights; disdaining to have them determined, as those of other men are, by tribunals of justice. They regard the forgiveness of injuries, and all the peaceful and gentle virtues of man, with supreme contempt; and claim to themselves, in opposition to the laws of God and their country, the adjudication of their own disputes, and the retribution of their own injuries. What should hinder a man of this character from indulging or executing revenge in any case, especially in a case of this importance? The rectitude of revenge is a prime principle of his creed: a principle to which he adheres with such tenacity and uniformity as, in a better cause, would do honour to the most exemplary Christian. He does not come to the consideration of this subject with doubts concerning the rectitude, or a com

viction of the sinfulness, of revenge, but with a determination long since established, and never called in question, that it is right: a determination to which he gives the extensive and commanding influence of a maxim. From the indulgence and the execution of revenge, he is restrained therefore by no moral consideration whatever. On the contrary, it is sanctioned by the very first principles of his morality. Of course, it becomes his boast; and is regarded by him as a part of his moral worth; as the ornament and glory of his character. It is evident then, that there is nothing to hinder him from the indulgence of this passion in any case; especially in a case to which he attaches this high importance.

Should it be said, that the injury in question is not considered as being of such magnitude; but that the laws prescribed by duellists to themselves, compel a man of honour to resent injuries which they themselves esteem small, in this manner: I answer; that the injury, how insignificant it may be in reality, is still such in the estimation of duellists, as to subject the challenger unavoidably to this exposure, and to all the evils by which it is followed. In this view only it is regarded by him: and all the resentment, all the feelings of revenge, naturally flowing from an injury of this magnitude, will be awakened in his breast.

In the mind of the challenged the same emotions will be roused of course by the challenge itself. The challenge, in his view, infers the same obligation on his part to expose his own life; and either to lose it, or destroy that of his antagonist. Against his antagonist therefore, all that hostility will be excited in his mind, which is the natural result of such an injury. Now, let me ask any man of common candour, whether it is credible, that in two men thus circumstanced, strong feelings of revenge will not of course be kindled? They are men, not only wrathful and revengeful in their nature, but glorying in the indulgence of wrath and revenge. They openly declare the exercise of these passions, in this extreme manner, to be right honourable to themselves, and ornamental to the human character. For this very exercise of these passions they esteem themselves superior to other men; style themselves "*brave*," "*men of honour*," and "*gentlemen*;" and name others "*cowards*,"

"*scoundrels*," and "*rascals*." Is it possible, that habitually entertaining these opinions, and habitually indulging these passions, they should not exercise them peculiarly on such an occasion?

I well know, that duellists profess themselves to be free from these passions in cases of this kind; and declare, that they proceed to these horrible rencounters with entire coolness and good-nature. These professions, however, have not the most distant claim to credit. All men, who feel themselves exposed to the censures of mankind, endeavour to rebut them in the best manner in their power. Fair professions are the most obvious means of rebutting them. In the same manner the bully conceals his cowardice, and the hypocrite his irreligion; and both have as good claims to be believed as the duellist. Cool, indeed, he may be in some instances; that is, not agitated by fear; but every thing in his situation, and in his conduct, proves, that he is angry and revengeful.

6. *Duellists take the utmost pains to prepare themselves for this dreadful employment.*

In places where duelling is generally practised, it has become a regular employment; and may be fairly considered as a branch of a regular education of children and youths, to acquire skill and adroitness in the art of destroying human life by this species of violence. Children, at a very early period, employ themselves daily and yearly, through long periods of time, in shooting with pistols; and acquire skill by this practice, just as penmanship is acquired; with as much coolness, and with as much success. Men also, who have not received this education in early life, employ the sober years of maturer age in learning the same horrid art. To excel in it, is regarded by the adept himself, and his fellows, as an attainment of high distinction. To be able to split a ball upon the edge of a knife, or extinguish a candle with a pistol-ball, at the distance of the utmost goal of duelling, is, in the view of these men, to have arrived at glory, not a little resembling that of Turenne, or Marlborough.

In all this conduct is seen, with the slightest glance, deliberate design, a cold-blooded system, of taking away the life of man with the hand of violence; a design, a

tem, begun in childhood, and cherished, cultivated, and perfected, through every succeeding period. What dupe of credulity can be so absolutely blind to the whole nature of evidence, as not to see in this conduct, designs equally hostile against human life, more deliberate, and certainly not less guilty, than those of the *professed assassin?*

7. *The duellist takes away the life of his neighbour without a cause.*

In this respect, the murderer, in the appropriate sense, nay, the professed assassin, can, in many instances at least, more speciously justify himself, than the duellist. The murderer attacks his victim under the denomination of furious passion; at the moment when he has lost the possession of reason and conscience, and the consequent government of himself; under the consciousness of a real and intense injury; or with the hope of delivering himself from a persecutor. Brutus expected to free his country from a tyrant; and Charlotte Corde, to deliver hers from another. These, I acknowledge, are far from being solid or justifying reasons; yet they are specious. They are such as, in the moment of provocation and bitterness, would have great weight, and go far, in the phrenetic mind of a man violently in a passion, towards vindicating him to himself. But the duellist is roused to battle by a *contemptuous look*, a *slight word*, or some other wound given to mere pride. All these and the like things are perfectly harmless, if passed by with serenity and self-possession. At the worst, they are mere expressions of the opinion which the provoking person entertains of our character; an opinion which, if we are faithful to ourselves, can do us no harm; and which usually merits nothing but disregard, contempt, or pity. This the duellist has ample time to investigate, and to know: for the very manner of executing his resentment postpones the execution beyond the ordinary period of violent passion. Every duellist must confess, unless he will acknowledge his whole life to be a paroxysm of rage, that the seasons in which he acquires the skill of directing surely the weapons of death; in which he determines to become a professed duellist; in which he settles the principles and learns the rules of his profession; in which he fixes in his mind the proper causes of a

challenge, the proper motives for fighting, and the proper modes of conducting it; are not seasons of violence and provocation. He will confess, that the time of his future life, independently of the little periods of actual combat, which he spends in avowedly professing his deliberate intention of acting as a duellist on every occasion which he thinks a proper one, is not a time of agitation, wrath, and partial insanity.

Nor is the duellist more happy with respect *to the final cause of his conduct*, or the end which he expects to accomplish by this species of controversy.

*Reparation for an injury received is commonly alleged as this end.* But the death of his antagonist furnishes no such reparation. His neighbour's loss of life lessens, in no manner nor degree, an injury which he has received from him; and cannot possibly restore to him lost property, or lost reputation. The fact, that he has challenged and killed a man, will make him neither richer, nor more honourable, nor more happy. He may indeed acquire honour in the opinion of a few men, as foolish, unprincipled, and abandoned, as himself. But the good opinion of these men is disgrace. In the view of every wise and good man, he renders himself deeply shameful, and supremely guilty. He may perhaps enjoy what men of furious passions sometimes call happiness; *viz.* the fell pleasure found by such men in revenge. That revenge is sweet to the taste of a bad man, I am not disposed to question. But it is bitter and dreadful in the end. Let the duellist remember, that God hath said, *To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense:* that he has forbidden us *to avenge ourselves;* or to *bear any grudge against our neighbour:* subjoining this solemn and authoritative reason, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay it.* Let him read and ponder the parable of *the servant who owed ten thousand talents;* and when he finds that servant *thrust into prison, and delivered over to the tormentors,* as his final and irrevocable doom; let him ask himself; what will become of *him,* who, instead of imprisoning his fellow-servant, puts him to a violent death, and sends him into eternity with all his sins upon his head? Then let him further ask, whether the pleasure of revenge is sufficiently great to balance the immense hazard which he incurs for the sake of this gratification?

In the mean time, *a duel, allowing that it should terminate in the death of him who gave the provocation, alters not in the least the state of the supposed injury, nor of him who received it.* If he has been charged with cowardice, and is really a coward; he will still remain so. If he is not, the charge will not make him a coward. If he has been charged with lying, and has really lied; he will still remain a liar; unless he becomes an honest man by repentance and reformation. If he has not lied; the charge can never seriously affect his reputation, nor persuade a single sober man to believe him a liar. Men, in this country at least, have usually little to fear from such charges as these. If they will be faithful to themselves; if they will exhibit the virtues which are denied to them on all such occasions as call them into exercise; and renounce or avoid the opposite vices; the world, bad as it is, will almost always discern their true character; and will most generally do justice to it. Sometimes, I acknowledge, they may, even while they exercise a good degree of patience, smart under the lash of unmerited censure. These reasons however can rarely be of long continuance; and, while they last, will to a wise man, in most cases, be eminently profitable, by teaching him to moderate the inordinate attachment, so commonly, so foolishly, and so dangerously, indulged, to the applause of mankind. This is one, and in my view the chief, exercise of that *love to the world* which the Scriptures declare to be incompatible with *love to God.* The effectual mortification of this attachment, strange as it may seem to the duellist, would yield him more serene, unmingled, and enduring pleasure, than all that which has been found in all the gratifications furnished by duelling since the beginning of time. Let the duellist also remember, that in this very act of attempting to destroy his neighbour's life, he more grossly injures his own character, than ten thousand charges such as those which he thus furiously resents could possibly do. In the view of every man of sober reflection, he brands upon his character the stamp of murder, the blackest mark of infamy which can be worn by man.

But it will be replied to these observations by the duellist, that *the anguish which he suffers, is such as he cannot*

*possibly bear; and that there is no way in which he can render life even supportable under such an imputation on his character, without taking the life of the slanderer.* This plea has been often seriously made. I will therefore examine it.

In the first place, *The allegation contained in it is untrue.* The anguish complained of might be easily supported without the death of its author. There are no words which more frequently delude those who use them, than *can* and *cannot, possible* and *impossible.* We often say and believe, that *we cannot do that, which we merely will not;* and frequently pronounce that conduct to be *impossible,* which is only *very disagreeable.* The apostles, and the Christian martyrs of every age, were, in many instances, possessed of as much understanding and sensibility, and therefore understood the nature of the injuries which they received, as well at least as the duellist in question; and felt them as deeply. Yet they bore slanders more gross, more frequently repeated, more extensively believed, and continued through a much longer duration. They bore them also, without repining, often without complaining, and always without sinking. Women also, of extreme delicacy and exquisite sensibility, have sustained, not with patience only, but with fortitude also, the most brutal accusations. Certainly a man who boasts so much of his firmness of character, as a duellist always does, must be ashamed of possessing less hardihood than women and Christians.

Secondly. *This anguish chiefly is voluntarily created by himself.* It is nothing but the pain of wounded pride; a passion more injurious to his peace, and more hostile to his moral character, than the slander which he feels so deeply: a passion which, if he were a wise and good man, he would use every hopeful exertion to mortify and subdue. Independently of the feelings occasioned by this passion, the slander of which he complains would do him very little harm.

But he has been called a coward. So have thousands and millions of others who regarded the imputation only with sport. But he has been called a liar. So have vast numbers of the best men who have ever lived: who, though not

insensible of the slander, have nevertheless passed quietly on through life in much the same manner as if it had never been uttered. Were the duellist possessed of the same spirit, he would feel as little anguish from this source as they felt. The whole difference between him and them is created, both foolishly and sinfully, by his own pride.

Thirdly. *The murderer, in the appropriate sense, can usually make the same plea in his own behalf; and with more force.* It cannot be doubted, that in the hour of extreme provocation and abuse, such abuse as awakens for the first time the dreadful purpose of murder, an agitation must be felt, and an anguish suffered, far more intense than that which is ordinarily experienced by the duellist. He has made it a part of his general system, and a deliberate purpose, to destroy human life. To a mind thus prepared, no event of this nature can come wholly unlooked for; or be, as in the other case, a matter of mere and absolute surprise. A mind thus circumstanced can hardly suffer in the same degree from the very same provocation. But the provocations usually given to the duellist, are injuries far inferior, in their degree, to those which ordinarily excite in the human breast a purpose so new to it, and so horrible, as murder. The duellist has been disciplined to this object, and comes to it with the cool feelings of a veteran. The murderer is a raw adventurer, who has never seen this terrible object in a near view before. He is therefore urged to the conflict by extreme provocatives only; with intense agitation; and with an impelling anguish sufficiently great to overcome his dread and horror.

Fourthly. *The laws of the land provide, in the mean time, a reasonable preparation for all those injuries, which the wisdom of legislators has thought it proper, or been able, to redress; and at least as ample reparation for him as for his fellow-citizens.* With this reparation he is bound to be contented, until the legislature shall provide farther redress. If he has a right to adjudicate his own cause, and redress his own injuries, every other citizen has the same right. But if this pretended right were to be universally exercised, government would be at an end. Anarchy, the real box of Pandora, would empty all its miseries upon mankind, and the nation be converted into a band of murderers. He who,

in this plainest of all cases, will not *submit to the ordinances of man for the Lord's sake*, will certainly receive the *condemnation* which he has threatened.

Fifthly. *There are innumerable other cases, in which greater injuries are done to mankind, than those which are done to the duellist, and in their nature far more distressing.* Those who have suffered them have therefore, according to this argument, a right to relieve themselves of their distress, by taking away the lives of those who have occasioned it. My neighbour, for example, has ejected me from my farm by an injurious lawsuit, and left me and my family beggars. He has accused me, as a merchant, of negligence, fraud, or bankruptcy; and, by bringing my creditors suddenly upon me, has not only stripped me of my property, but precluded me from acquiring any more. He has negligently brought the small-pox into my family, and has thus produced the death of my child. He has impeached my Christian character, and has thus procured my excommunication from the church of Christ. All these injuries are incomparably greater than those which usually occasion duels. But who that has any conscience, or any common sense, will say, that I am warranted, for any or all of them, to put my neighbour to death? Who does not see that, were these and other injuries of a similar nature to be retributed in this manner, a nation would be converted into banditti, and their country into a field of blood?

8. *The duellist acts against the most powerful and persuasive reasons; unanswerably obliging him to abstain from this guilty conduct.*

In the first place, *He most wickedly exposes his own life to destruction.* On this subject I shall not dwell at present, because I expect to consider the subject of *suicide* in the succeeding discourse.

Secondly, *He wickedly deserts the duties which he owes to his family and friends.* If he has *parents*; he owes them reverence; gratitude; strong affection; filial care in sickness and old age; support, if they need it; and the innumerable consolations which that evil day so affectingly demands, and which none but a child is either able or willing to give. Particularly, he owes them that exquisite enjoyment, which is found in the affectionate, virtuous, and

amiable, conduct of our beloved offspring. If he has *a wife;* he owes her all that provision for her wants, and for her comfort; the consolations in sickness, and in sorrow; the kindness and tenderness; the faithful and affectionate attention to her happiness; which he has engaged in the marriage covenant: a covenant involving substantially the same obligations with those of an oath. If he has *children;* he owes them sustenance, education in knowledge, business, and religion; his instructions, and his government; his example, and his prayers. But all these duties, required by the infinite authority, and in the two last cases voluntarily assumed also by himself, he basely deserts; and, by entering the field of slaughter, cuts *them* off from the possibility of receiving, and *himself* from the power of performing, them. At the same time, he leaves them all buried, through life, in the hopeless agonies of remembering and feeling, that he voluntarily went *as an ox to the slaughter; died as a fool dieth;* and, in the combined perpetration of suicide and murder, entered without a prayer, and without a hope of forgiveness, into the presence of his Judge.

But should he (a thing which he has no right to expect) survive the conflict, he survives only to present to his parents a son, to his wife a husband, and to his children a father, blackened with the guilt of cold, deliberate murder. In the mean time he has tempted his neighbour to the same enormous sin; and entailed upon *his* family and friends also the same tremendous evil.

Thirdly. *He does incalculable and irreparable injuries to his country.* He weakens the government of his country, by practically adopting a principle which, if right in *him*, would be equally right in *all others;* and which, if adopted by *them*, would destroy social order in a moment: viz. *that an individual is to be his own judge in his own cause.* He injures his country also, by robbing it of the services and life of one of its members; in all probability more important, as the case may be and has been, to its safety and welfare, than those of millions like himself. Finally, he injures his country boundlessly, as well as irreparably, in contributing, by his opinions and example, to authorize,

extend, and perpetuate, the same baleful iniquity in his fellow-men.

## REMARKS.

1. *The observations made in this discourse present to us one of the strongest examples of human depravity.*

Life to man is his all. On it every thing is suspended which man can call his own: his enjoyments, his hopes, his usefulness, and his salvation. Our own life is to us, therefore, invaluable. As we are most reasonably required to *love our neighbour as ourselves, his* life ought, in our estimation, to possess the same value. In conformity to these views, mankind have universally regarded those who have violently deprived others of life with supreme abhorrence, and branded their names with singular infamy. Murderers have been punished, in every age and country, with the most awful expressions of detestation, with the most formidable array of terror, and with the most excruciating means of agony. On the heads of murderers, at the same time, mankind have heaped curses without bounds. The city of refuge; nay, the altar itself, a strong tower of defence to every other criminal, has lost its hallowed character at the approach of a murderer; and emptied him out of its sacred recesses into the hands of the *avenger of blood.* God hath said, *A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person, he shall flee to the pit: let no man stay him.* In solemn response, the world has cried, *Amen.*

But all these sentiments, all these rights, all the obligations of this law, the duellist has violated. Nay, he has violated them in cool blood; with the deliberation of system; in the season of serenity; in the tranquillity of the closet. This violation he has made part of his creed, and settled purpose of his life; a governing rule of his conduct. All this he has done amid the various advantages of birth and education; under the light of science; with the Bible in his hand; and before the altar of his God. He has done it all, also, in the face of arguments which have commanded the conviction of all mankind except himself; and which would have convinced *him*, had his mind been honestly

open to the force of argument. His opinions have been a thousand times exposed; his arguments have been a thousand times refuted. Against him have been arrayed, in every Christian country, the common sense of mankind, the feelings of humanity, the solemn voice of law, and the infinitely awful command of the eternal God. With a moral hardihood, not often exampled even in this world, he encounters them all; overcomes them all; and goes coolly onward to the work of destruction; as coolly as if he were only performing a duty. How sinful must that heart be which can act in this manner!

2. *The government of every country is bound indispensably to punish duelling with exemplary severity; and, wherever death has been the consequence, with death.*

From the observations which have been made in this discourse it is clear, that few cases of murder occur among mankind, equally atrocious, or equally deserving of death, with that which is committed in a duel. Every thing pertaining to this subject also tends towards this issue, as regular and uniform means towards their proper ends. The crime, being as gross and heinous as murder in other cases, deserves the same punishment. It is also far more dangerous to a community, than murder in the customary acceptation. The persons whom duelling especially threatens are, in many instances, persons of distinction; formidable obstacles to the ambition of duellists; persons who, by their influence and talents, would naturally become important instruments of the public good; persons against whom the vulgar assassin rarely aims the stroke of his dagger. At the same time, the ravages of duelling are far more widely extended; and the number of its victims is of course far more multiplied.

The manner in which God has judged concerning this subject, is awfully displayed in the following passage. *If a man smite any person with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die; he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. Or if he smite him with a hand-weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die; he is a*

*murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer; when he meeteth him, he shall slay him. And if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by lying in wait, that he die; or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die; he that smote him shall surely be put to death: for he is a murderer. The revenger of blood shall slay the murderer when he meeteth him. Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person, to cause him to die. Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death. And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the high-priest. So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood, it defileth the land; and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. Defile not, therefore, the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell; for I,* JEHOVAH, *dwell among the children of Israel.*

# SERMON CXVII.

## SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

### SUICIDE.

*Thou shalt not kill.*—EXODUS XX. 13.

THE next violation of this command which I shall have occasion to consider, is *suicide*, or *self-murder*. In examining this subject I shall,

I. *Consider the principal arguments urged in justification of suicide:* and,

II. *Shall allege several proofs of its criminality.*

Before I proceed to the consideration of the arguments

which have been supposed to justify suicide, it will be necessary to observe, that there are two totally distinct classes of mankind by which this crime is committed: those who are labouring under the disease of melancholy, or that of derangement; and those who act in the same manner in the full possession of their faculties. In the former of these classes the mental powers are so much disordered as greatly to change, if not absolutely to annihilate, the criminality. The latter are guilty of this crime in the same sense as of any other. To the former class it is obvious, arguments on this or any other topic can be of no use, if addressed to them while under the influence of these infirmities. An habitual conviction of the turpitude of this crime established in their minds when possessed of their full strength and soundness, may indeed, and not improbably, so far influence them as to prevent this terrible catastrophe. In their diseased state, such of them as have fallen under my observation, have been incapable of being controlled by the force of argument. The observations which I shall make concerning this subject, will therefore be directed to those of the latter class: to men who, in the full possession of their reason, from sudden passion, from disappointment in the pursuit of some darling object—such as fame, power, wealth, or pleasure; the loss of some important enjoyment; the sufferance of some severe disgrace; or the dread of some expected evil—put an end to their lives. These men, though acting thus irrationally under the pressure of violent feeling, may yet be reasoned with in their cooler moments. In these moments a conviction may perhaps be wrought, and principles established in their minds which may control the distempered thoughts, and prevent the dangerous decisions too naturally springing up in seasons of violent agitation.

The general doctrine insisted on by Mr. Hume, the only writer whom I shall attempt to answer, or whom I consider as having any claim to an answer, on this subject, is, *that man has a right to dispose of his own life.* This he asserts in various forms of expression; all of them contributing to shew, that he considered this right as to be exercised according to the pleasure of the individual. Indeed, if such a right exists, the exercise of it cannot be limited in any

other manner; unless the limitation be directly expressed by him who alone can give or limit the right. But no such limitation has been expressed by him. In the Scriptures this is not even alluded to; and whatever proof the light of nature may furnish that God has given us this right, there cannot be a pretence that it discovers to us any such limitation. The right itself, therefore, is to be exercised according to every man's judgment; or, what will in this case be exactly the same, according to every man's pleasure.

But where is the proof, that God has given this right to mankind? The arguments which Mr. Hume adduces to this purpose are chiefly the following.

1. *That we were created for the end of effectuating our own enjoyment in the present life.* "Men (he says) are intrusted to their own judgment and discretion, and may employ every faculty with which they are endowed, to provide for their ease, happiness, or preservation."

In a former discourse, I have explained the end for which man was made; and have, I trust, satisfactorily proved, that *man was created to glorify his Maker, by knowing, reverencing, loving, serving, and enjoying, him for ever.* The accomplishment of this end in the creation of man I have, unless I have been deceived, shewn to be in the highest degree honourable to God, and in the highest degree productive of happiness to man. That this end, whether the real end for which man was created or not, is incomparably nobler, better, and more worthy of God, than the end proposed by Mr. Hume, which is no other than *the enjoyment of the pleasures of sense in this world,* cannot be denied. No more can it be denied, that of the ends which were capable of being answered by the creation of man, God selected that which was noblest, best, and most worthy of his character; unless it be also denied, not only that he is infinitely wise and good, but that he is wise and good at all. As therefore there are ends for which man might be created, nobler and better than that allowed by Mr. Hume; as one infinitely nobler and better has been pointed out; it is certain, that that proposed by him is not the true end of the creation of man.

Besides, the enjoyment of this pleasure, in the manner exhibited by Mr. Hume himself is inconsistent with the

istence of virtue in man; and much more with the existence of perfect virtue. But to be virtuous, is to render more honour to our Creator, to be more conformed to his pleasure, and to enjoy more happiness, than is possible if we are destitute of virtue. To be perfectly virtuous, is to render the highest honour to our Creator; to be perfectly conformed to his pleasure; and to be perfectly happy. If then God regarded either himself or us, he did not propose, as the end of creating man, the enjoyment of the happiness mentioned by Mr. Hume.

2. *Mr. Hume alleges, as another argument for this right, the insignificance of human life.* "In the sight of God (he says) every event is alike important; and the life of a man is of no greater importance to the universe, than that of an oyster."

Our Saviour informs us, on the contrary, that *men are of more value in the sight of God than many sparrows.* Common sense irresistibly subscribes to the truth of this declaration. It is impossible to believe the contrary declaration. God unquestionably sees things as they are. But as unquestionably a mind possessed of the powers of thought, volition, and motivity; a mind capable of knowing, and in many instances actually knowing, loving, serving, and glorifying, its Creator; a mind which can originate and diffuse important good to its fellow-creatures; a mind formed for immmortal being, and destined to an endless improvement in knowledge, virtue, and enjoyment; is certainly of more value than many oysters. All this, however, depends on the life of man. The life of man, therefore, is of more value than that of an oyster. Were it not, parents, so far as the light of nature teaches us, might, in agreement with the doctrine of Diogenes and other cynics, lawfully roast and eat their children; as they may now roast and eat oysters. A man of common sense would hardly be persuaded, that Moses, Paul, Louis the Good, the two Gustavuses, Alfred the Great, and Washington, were of no more importance to the universe than oysters. With a view probably to strengthen this allegation, Mr. Hume asks, "*Where is the crime of turning a few ounces of blood out of their channel?*" By this question he undoubtedly intends, that his readers shall suppose suicide to be nothing more than merely di-

verting the course of a few ounces of blood. If Mr. Hume believed this, he deserved very little of that reputation which he has acquired for understanding. If he did not believe it, the question does very little honour to his candour or sincerity. It is no crime to turn a few ounces of blood out of their channel. Often it is a duty; because it is the means of preserving or restoring health. Many ounces of blood may be thus diverted from their course; and life be not only continued, but invigorated and prolonged. In this case, the sphere of man's usefulness, and duty, and comfort, may in this world be enlarged; and his happiness in the world to come secured and increased. But the destruction of human life, by whatever means it is accomplished, terminates usefulness, duty, and comfort, in the present world; and if voluntarily accomplished, prevents the existence of happiness in the world to come. The difference between these things, as intended by Mr. Hume, is of course infinite. The phraseology which appropriately expresses the one, cannot therefore be employed, consistently with propriety, nor with even vulgar honesty, to denote the other.

3. *The same writer argues this right from the smallness of the objects and accidents by which the life of man is frequently destroyed without his concurrence.* "A hair (he says), a fly, an insect, is able to destroy this mighty being, whose life is of so much importance. Is it an absurdity then (he asks) to suppose, that human prudence may lawfully dispose of what depends on such insignificant causes?"

To this question the reply is easy and complete.

The destruction of human life by a fly, an insect, or a hair, is accomplished, as every man perfectly well knows, and as every man habitually says, by the immediate providence of God. In the case of *suicide*, it is destroyed by the will of man himself. God, who gave life, has an unquestionable right to take it away. It is yet to be proved, that man, who has only received it from God, has a right to destroy it without the known permission of its Author.

4. *This assertion is however denied by Mr. Hume; and he directly declares, that suicide is as absolutely the work of God, as any of those events specified under the preceding head.* "When I fall upon my own sword (he says), I re-

ceive my death equally from the hands of the Deity, as if it had proceeded from a lion, a precipice, or a fever."

Mr. Hume does not *in this essay* any where in form discuss the question, whether man is a moral agent, in such a sense as to be accountable for his actions, and to be deserving of praise or blame, punishment or reward. But it is evident that he all along proceeds upon the supposition, that man is not such an agent. Of this he has given very numerous and very plain indications. A very clear and decisive one is found in the declaration which I am now considering. If man is not such an agent, all the observations in this essay might have been spared. For, plainly, no action of man could in this case be of a criminal, because it could not be of a moral nature. In this case it would be equally just to censure a post, or a wall, for falling upon a man, and killing him, as to censure an assassin for producing the same catastrophe by an act of murder. If man be not such an agent, all inquiries concerning the moral nature of his actions are nugatory, because they are unmeaning. Mr. Hume particularly ought never to have written the numerous things which he has so strenuously urged concerning right and wrong, in the different parts of his works. Neither rectitude nor its opposite are predicable of *brutes*. Why? Because they are not moral agents. If *men* are not moral agents, neither would these attributes be any more predicable of *them*. But if men are moral agents, then those which are called human actions, are not in any such sense the acts of God, as to prevent men from being accountable for them, or to prevent them from being truly commendable and rewardable, for one class of such actions, and blameworthy and punishable for the opposite. All nations, in all ages, have accordingly censured and punished such as were guilty of one class of these actions, and praised and rewarded such as performed the other. On this foundation rests all human intercourse, and all human discipline. The child is punished at home and at school; because he is considered as having done that which is wrong; and rewarded in both, because he is considered as having done that which is right. On the same grounds men are disesteemed, hated, censured, and punished even with death; or approved, loved, applauded, and have

their merit acknowledged by the most ample reward. As this has been the universal conduct of men from the beginning, it is a clear and full testimony of the views entertained by the human mind concerning this subject It is farther to be observed, that men cannot act in any other manner. The admission of the doctrine, that mankind are not such agents, would ruin the world. Nor ought it to be forgotten, that, although many persons have thought proper to assert this doctrine, not an individual among them has ever been found who acted in conformity to it: not one, who did not as bitterly complain of what he called wrongs, or vindicate as strenuously what he called his rights, as his his fellow-men. But should we admit this argument, it will prove more than either we or even Mr. Hume may be aware of; at least, more than he intended. If men are not moral agents; if their voluntary actions are merely the acts of God; then it will follow, that, equally with suicide, their frauds, lies, oppressions, and murders, are acts of God. Should a swindler cheat Mr. Hume out of his estate; or an assassin plunge a poniard into his bosom; it would, I think, be a very odd, a very unsatisfactory consolation to him, to be told by the villain, that he ought to be perfectly contented with the villany, since it was only an act of his Creator.

5. *Another argument alleged by Mr. Hume for the right in question, is, that suicide does not disturb the order of the universe.* "There is no being (he says) which, by ever so irregular an action, can encroach upon the plan of the Creator's providence, or disorder the universe."

If Mr. Hume intended by this declaration, that God rules all things with such a universal and absolute dominion, as that *none can stay his hand, nor any* being lawfully *say unto him, What dost thou?* as that he will bring "good out of the evil, and order out of the confusion," occasioned by sin; he has undoubtedly declared here a truth of high importance. Unfortunately for him however, this truth will contribute nothing to the support of his cause. No being can indeed resist the hand of God. But every sinner wishes to resist it; and in this wish becomes guilty, hateful, and deserving of punishment.

In this declaration, and many others contained in the

same treatise, the author studiously avoids mentioning what he ought every where to have strongly insisted on, *the broad and obvious distinction between the providential and the preceptive will of God.* It is unquestionably a part of the providential will of God, to permit (for reasons inscrutable by us, at least in most instances, but undoubtedly sufficient in themselves) the existence of sinful actions. But it is no part of his preceptive will, either to require or to allow them. His preceptive will, or in other words the moral law, requires of all intelligent beings perfect holiness: a disposition perfectly loving what he loves, and hating what he hates. So evident is this truth, that all nations not absolutely sunk in ignorance, have discerned it to a considerable extent by the mere light of nature. The *savages of the western wilderness* have acknowledged, equally with the Greeks and Romans, that reverence and gratitude were due to their gods; and that *they* required of men justice, truth, and kindness, to their fellow-men. Mr. Hume himself would not dare to say, that God does not love these things; nor that he does not require them of his creatures, any more than he loves and requires impiety, ingratitude, injustice, falsehood, and cruelty. He would not say that God at all loves or requires the things last mentioned. Loose as his apprehensions concerning religion and morality were, he would not say, that God does not hate the crimes which I have specified; nor that he has not forbidden them to mankind. He would not say, that these crimes are equally agreeable to the will of God, equally pleasing to him, as actions of his intelligent creatures, with the virtues mentioned above.

But all this he must say, in order to make this allegation an argument to his purpose.

If no action of any being can be so irregular as to be opposed to the preceptive will of God; then it will follow, that impiety, ingratitude, profaneness, atheism, fraud, lying, oppression, injustice, adultery, rape, and murder, are equally agreeable to the Creator, with piety, justice, truth, benevolence, purity, and mercy. Then it will follow also, that God is wholly indifferent to all these objects; and that all which is meant by right and wrong, holds exactly the same place in his estimation and pleasure. In other words

it will follow, that the Creator of the universe is wholly regardless of the moral character and conduct of his creatures.

6. *Mr. Hume insists, that suicide does no harm to society; or at the least, that as by cutting off his life in this manner, he only ceases to do good, he does the least supposable harm to society.*

To this I answer, that if he has *friends*, he compels them to lament his death, with views peculiarly distressing by their perplexity, and with feelings of agony and despair. Perhaps no object, unless the person who is cut off in the unrepented guilt of murdering another, is regarded with more painful emotions, than a beloved friend who has voluntarily terminated his own life. The minds of those whom he leaves behind him, sink under the remembrance of what he has done in this world, and tremble to follow him to another. Keen indeed must be the edge of that distress, which finds its only consolation and its only hope, in the doubting belief, perhaps in the faint conjecture, that the friend whom it deplores was hurried out of life by the impulse of delirium.

If the suicide had a *family*, he has robbed them of all that advice, consolation, sympathy, and those kind offices universally, which he owed to *them* in a peculiar manner. All these he has vowed to his *wife*. God has made it his duty to render them to his *children*. To both also he is bound by the same obligations to furnish support. This perhaps he *may* have provided. If he has, he has still robbed his children of that parental instruction, government, habituation, and example, which together constitute, in most cases, far the most arduous, the most important, and the most useful labour of man; and the chief duty which ordinarily he has it in his power ever to perform.

*Society at large* he robs of one of its members, and of all the duties which that member owed to society.

At the same time, he has presented to all these an example which, if followed by them, would destroy at once the family, the community, and the world. Yet if he has acted right, it would be equally right for them to follow him. No rule can be formed concerning this subject, but a universal one. Mr. Hume has made it such. If his rule be right, then by merely adhering to rectitude, the present inhabitants

of the world may exterminate the race of man in a moment. But,

7. *Mr. Hume, supposing that men would not make use of this right, unless in circumstances of distress, considers this at least as a justifying cause for suicide.*

"Most people (he says) who lie under any temptation to abandon existence, are in some such situation; that is, in age, or under infirmities; incapable of promoting the interest of society; a burden to it; or afflicted in some manner or other." On this subject I observe,

First. *That this situation, whatever it may be, is one in which God by his providence has placed the man.* It is therefore a situation of which we cannot reasonably or lawfully complain, unless we can lawfully and reasonably complain of the dispensations of God.

Secondly. *It is a situation in which, if we perform our duty, we may glorify our Maker, by voluntarily fulfilling such designs, as infinite wisdom and goodness has thought proper to accomplish by our instrumentality, and has put it into our power to accomplish.* It may be said, that *should we put an end to our lives, God will still be glorified.* I grant it. But we shall not be voluntary instruments of his glory. This is our duty, and our only duty. If this then be not done, our whole duty is left undone. If we refuse to do this duty, we refuse to obey the will of our Maker, rebel against his government, and voluntarily oppose his designs. This is sin; and the only sin. What the duties are to which we are called in cases of affliction, common sense, even without the aid of revelation, might, one would think, determine with no great difficulty. They are obviously the duties of submission, dependance, patience, and fortitude; prayer for our support and deliverance; and such efforts for this end, as are consistent with the spirit here specified. By this character God is as really and certainly glorified, as by any other which man can exhibit. It scarcely needs the aid of revelation to discern, that submission to God must be an acceptable offering to him. But if we put an end to our lives because we are afflicted, we declare in the decisive language of action, that we will not, or cannot, bear what God has been pleased to lay upon us. In the former case we declare, that we will not submit to his dis-

pensations: in the latter, we moreover declare, that the burdens which he lays upon us, are such as we cannot, and therefore such as we ought not, to endure: of course, that they are oppressive and unjust.

Thirdly. *The case is falsely stated by Mr. Hume.*

There are no situations which are intolerable, except those by which life is brought to an end without our intervention; and these are incapable of being referred to the case in hand. In every other case we can sustain our afflictions if we please. That it is our duty to sustain them, and to sustain them willingly, cannot be denied, unless by him who also denies, that it is our duty to obey God in any case.

Fourthly. *The position of Mr. Hume, that we are useless to society, in any situation in which we can become guilty of suicide, is also false.*

It will be remembered, that I all along except cases of melancholy and delirium. It is however true, that even in these cases no man can know that he will not, at some future time, be useful to his fellow-men. In every other case, a man possessed of the power of contriving and executing his own destruction, may be, and can know that he may be, useful to the world. I can think of no case more favourable to the position of Mr. Hume, than that of a person confined for a long period to his bed; or, as it is commonly termed, *bed-rid.* A man even in this situation may, if he pleases, be extensively useful. The patience, fortitude, and piety, with which he may sustain this trying affliction, may be among the most edifying and persuasive proofs of the reality, power, and excellence, of the religion which he professes, and the efficacious means of conversion and salvation to multitudes. Mr. Hume himself says, that "the damnation of one man is an infinitely greater evil than the subversion of a thousand millions of kingdoms." This evil the man who is bed-rid may prevent, with regard to himself and with regard to others; and may also be the means of accomplishing the contrary inestimable good. It cannot be said that such a man is useless. At the same time it is a false supposition, that a man can be useless who acts as he ought; or, in other words, does his duty in any situation in which God is pleased to place him. God does nothing in vain. Still less can it be supposed that he

places an intelligent being in any situation, in which his obedience to the divine will must be useless.

Fifthly. *Neither is it true, that any man is necessarily a burden to society.*

A vicious man is, I acknowledge, often such a burden. But he is not necessarily vicious. His sloth, prodigality, insincerity, profaneness, falsehood, fraud, cruelty, or whatever vice he may be guilty of, is wholly the result of his own choice. The moment he renounces these evils, he will become not a burden, but a blessing.

A virtuous man may become unable to support himself; may be incurably sick, or hopelessly bereft of his most useful faculties; and, in either of these situations, may be esteemed a burden to society by the lazy, the covetous, and the unfeeling. But he will be esteemed such by no virtuous man. He who remembers, that ministrations of kindness to the *least of Christ's brethren* will be accepted as offerings to himself, will never, unless in some unhappy moment of sloth or worldliness, think the performance of it burdensome. Christ has informed his disciples, that *the poor they will always have with them.* On *his* part the legacy was not unkind: to *us* it is obviously a blessing. Nothing more enlarges the heart, refines the affections, or improves the character, than kindness freely rendered to the afflicted. Nothing more excites a spirit of dependance on God; or awakens gratitude for his blessings to us; or expands the feelings of benevolent sympathy; or endears to us our fellow-men, particularly our fellow-Christians; or assimilates our disposition to that of the Redeemer. He to whom, without any fault of his own, mankind are indebted for these benefits, cannot be a burden to society.

I have now reviewed every argument of Mr. Hume, which, in my opinion, merits an answer: and his arguments, so far as I know, are all, of any importance, which have been hitherto alleged in favour of suicide. I shall only add one observation to those which I have already made under this head. It is this: *All the distresses almost, which give birth to this wanton destruction of human life, are the mere effects of predominant wickedness in the mind of the suicide.* Losses at the gaming-table, disappointments of ambition, mortified avarice, wounded pride, and frustrated hopes of

sensuality, are usually the immediate sources of this crime. Instead of killing himself for such reasons as these, the true interest of the unhappy man demands of him, with infinite force, that he should live, repent, and reform.

II. *I shall now allege several proofs of the criminality of suicide, in addition to those which have been unavoidably specified in answering the arguments of Mr. Hume.* Of these, the

1st, *which I shall mention, is the text.*

In the first discourse from this passage it was observed, that the command which it contains is expressed in the most absolute manner, *Thou shalt not kill;* that to kill is the thing forbidden, and by the words is forbidden in all cases whatever; that the words were chosen by God himself, and binds therefore with infinite authority; and that man cannot lawfully originate an exception, nor in any other manner limit their import. These observations, it is presumed, cannot be denied to be true. But if they are true, the text forbids suicide in the most absolute manner.

Mr. Hume indeed observes, *that the law of Moses is abolished, except so far as it is established by the law of nature.* A Christian will probably be satisfied of the authority of the *decalogue,* without this condition, *when he finds it expressly established by Christ.*

2. *In addition to this decisive proof, a proof so decisive as to need no addition, I observe, that the suicide hurries himself to the judgment in the commission of a gross crime, of which he cannot repent.* If we should even allow, that the criminality of this act was not capable of being proved, so far as the act itself only is concerned; it cannot be denied, that *he who commits it is, in some degree at least, uncertain whether it be lawful or not.* To abstain from it, he at the same time knows to be lawful. In this case, to commit suicide is a gross sin; because the perpetrator refuses to do that which he knows to be right, and does that of whose rectitude he has no assurance.

Farther. *No person, who thus puts an end to his life, is assured that his salvation, independently of this act, is secured.* Of course, even on the most favourable supposi-

tion, he puts his eternity at hazard; and ventures, in an inexcusable and dreadful manner, upon perdition.

Finally. *There are,* to say the least, *strong, and hitherto unanswered, reasons to prove suicide a crime; and that of enormous magnitude.*

These reasons will never be answered. It will always be true, that there are important ends to be accomplished by every man, during the whole period through which his life would extend, did he not lay violent hands on himself. These ends are constituted and set before him by God himself. In refusing to accomplish them, the suicide violates the highest obligations under which he is or can be placed. He is, according to the supposition, in affliction. This affliction both reason and revelation declare to be sent by his Creator. It is sent for the very purpose of amending his character; awakening in him patience and submission; faith and fortitude; enabling him to feel his dependance; softening his heart with tenderness towards his fellow-creatures; exciting in him a spirit of universal obedience; and thus preparing him for endless life. I need not say, that these designs, on the part of God, are pre-eminently benevolent; nor that in refusing to accomplish them, nor that *in sinning against God* in this manner, *he* supremely *wrongs his own soul.*

Human life is plainly intended by the Creator, to be a mere course of duty and obedience. This is the direct appointment of the Creator. To wish to frustrate or reverse this appointment, much more to attempt the frustration or reversion of it by overt acts, is sinful of course. How sinful then must be this violent attempt to oppose the divine will!

But the suicide cuts himself off from every opportunity, from the very possibility, of repenting of these multiplied crimes. Hurried into eternity by his own hand, he appears before the bar of God, with all his guilt upon his head. Should it be said, that he may secure himself an opportunity of repentance by a gradual death; I answer, that neither the temper of mind with which he destroys his life, nor the views which God cannot but entertain of this violent act of rebellion, furnish him with any hope that he will become penitent.

3. *The Scriptures expressly forbid us voluntarily to sink under any affliction.*

*My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when thou art rebuked of him.*

Christ has said to all his disciples, *In the world ye shall have tribulation.* But he has most benevolently subjoined, *In me ye shall have peace:* that is, peace awakened in the midst of your afflictions, or flowing from them as a regular consequence of your submission and sanctification. Accordingly, St. Paul declares, that *although no affliction is for the present joyous, but all are grievous; yet nevertheless they afterward yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness.*

In these passages we are required unconditionally to sustain our afflictions with submission, patience, and fortitude. This command we cannot disobey, even in thought, without sin; much less in so violent an act of opposition. Suicide is the result, not only of a total want of submission, but of direct and violent hostility against the will of God. It is a declaration, that we will not *endure the chastening of God;* and that the afflictions with which he is pleased to visit us are intolerable; and that they are therefore unreasonable and unrighteous specimens of oppression in his administrations. No charge can be more obviously blasphemous than this; more unsuited to the character of the Creator; or more unbecoming the mouth of a creature.

4. *The suicide is always bound to prolong his life by personal duties which are indispensable.*

He is bound to secure his own salvation. He is bound to provide for his family. If he performs not these so long as they need them, and so long as it is in his power, *he denies the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* He is bound to train up his children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* He is bound to promote the happiness and salvation of those around him; and generally of his fellow-men. Universally, whatever is his situation, he may, if he lives, do good to himself, and to mankind: and this good he is bound to do so long as God is pleased to spare his life. When he destroys himself, he is guilty of gross rebellion against God in refusing to perform these duties.

5. *The Scriptures never exhibit suicide as the conduct of any but very wicked men.*

Job, David, Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and *his three companions; Christ and the apostles;* underwent afflictions incomparably more severe than those for which the suicide destroys his life. Yet neither of those thought it proper voluntarily to terminate his own life. Daniel and his companions, Christ and his apostles, were in most instances, however, destined to a violent and scandalous death: one of the very cases which Mr. Hume has selected to shew the lawfulness of suicide. This they perfectly well knew; but not one of them appears to have thought of preventing the pain and disgrace by laying violent hands on himself. This case is plainly an extreme one. None can be more so. Yet the perfect piety of Christ, and the exemplary piety of these virtuous men, instead of dictating this desperate course of conduct to *them*, taught them severally, to wait with humble resignation for the will of God, and patiently to receive their destiny from his hand. The example of these persons will be followed by every virtuous man.

Saul, an open rebel against his Maker, and the intentional murderer of David and Jonathan; Ahithophel, a traitor to his lawful sovereign; and Judas, a traitor to his Redeemer; were suicides. This conduct in them was the result of their dispositions; the product of such principles as controlled these abandoned men. It is therefore rationally argued, that suicide, in the view of the divine mind, is the moral consequence of the worst principles only. On the contrary, it is equally clear that virtue, in the evangelical sense, is totally incompatible with the perpetration of this act; and absolutely forbids the voluntary destruction of our own lives. He, who meditates the voluntary termination of his own life, ought solemnly to remember, that he is indulging a spirit which is directly opposed to that of Christ, and strongly assimilated to that of Saul, Ahithophel, and Judas.

# SERMON CXVIII.

## SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

### DRUNKENNESS.

*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.*—EPH. v. 18.

IN the preceding discourses I have considered *several methods in which life is destroyed, in opposition to the sixth command of the decalogue.* In this discourse I shall make some observations concerning *another of these methods;* viz. DRUNKENNESS.

Drunkenness is nearly allied to suicide. It is an equally certain means of shortening life. The principal difference, so far as the termination of life is concerned, lies in the mode. What is appropriately called suicide, is a *sudden or immediate termination of life.* Drunkenness brings it *gradually* to an end. The destruction, in both cases, is equally certain; and not materially different in the degree of turpitude. In many instances, indeed, this catastrophe is brought to pass at least as suddenly by drunkenness as by suicide. There is also another difference between these crimes. The suicide intends directly to destroy his life, and makes this his prime purpose: the drunkard thinks of nothing less: the prime object in his view is the gratification of his relish for strong drink, united with that bewildered elevation of spirits, which he feels in the hour of intoxication.

In the text we are expressly and universally forbidden to commit this sin. The penalty incurred by the commission, is as expressly declared in 1 Cor. vi. 10; where it is said, that *drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* This threatening we are not indeed to consider as absolute, any more than others expressed in a similar manner. Undoubtedly no person who enters eternity in the character of a drunkard, will *inherit the kingdom of God.* But I know of no reason to conclude, that he who, though once a drunkard, has become a penitent, will not be accepted.

This interesting subject I design to consider at large under the following heads.

I. *The nature;*

II. *The causes;*

III. *The evils; of drunkenness;* and,

IV. *The means of avoiding it.*

I. *I shall make a few observations concerning the natur of this sin.*

Drunkenness is that singular state of man, in which he loses, either partially or wholly, the use of his bodily and mental powers, under the operation of spirituous drink, opium, or other means of intoxication.

Drunkenness is either *occasional* or *habitual.*

*Occasional drunkenness* exists only in irregular, separate, solitary, or even singular instances; and is produced sometimes by design, and sometimes by accident.

*Habitual drunkenness* is a frequent, and usually a regular, intoxication; occasioned by that increased and peculiar love of strong drink, which is generated by occasional drunkenness.

Habitual drunkenness will be the principal subject of this discourse. It will only be necessary to remark, concerning occasional drunkenness, that all the observations almost concerning habitual drunkenness will be applicable to it, although in an inferior degree; and that, wherever the the subject shall appear to demand any serious discrimination, I shall endeavour to make them in the progress of the discussion.

II. *The causes of this sin,* by which I intend not the immediate, and properly efficient causes; such as those already mentioned; but those which although more remote, are yet deeply concerned in the production of it; are principally *the following.*

1. *Example.*

By this I intend, that we gradually acquire a habit of drunkenness, by seeing others drink; and, if I may be allowed the expression, catching the practice merely from the fact, that we often witness it in others. Wherever the character of those who set the example, is the object of

particular affection, esteem, or reverence, the influence of the example becomes proportionally great and dangerous. Parents in this manner become peculiarly, and other relations and friends generally, powerful means of seduction; and ruin to their children and other relatives. In this case, I suppose, nothing but the example, and the veneration and endearment by which it is accompanied, to produce the corruption of those to whom it is exhibited.

2. *Frequenting those places where strong drink is conveniently obtained.*

A tavern, especially a vulgar one, or a dram-shop, or an ale-house, newly opened, usually exhibits strongly, as well as clearly, the efficacy of this cause. Each of them soon begins to attract its train of drinking customers; and within a moderate period becomes surrounded by its circle of drunkards. There is scarcely a greater nuisance to society than houses of this nature; in which spirituous liquors are sold in small quantities to neighbouring inhabitants. Millions of the human race have, in these baleful haunts, taken the first fatal step towards perdition.

3. *Evil companions.*

These usually combine all the efficacy of the former causes with many additional temptations. They present *the example;* they provide *the retreat,* and *the convenience.* At the same time they add to these the force of direct and powerful solicitations; the sprightliness of wit; the gaiety of sports and songs; the pungency of ridicule; the influence of good nature and affection; and the power of that sympathy which is always found in social festivity. Such a combination is too powerful to be resisted by common minds; perhaps by any mind which is voluntarily, for any length of time, within its reach. He who frequents the society of jovial companions in an habitual manner, may fairly consider himself as destined in the end to become a sot.

4. *Customary and regular drinking.*

Multitudes of persons accustom themselves to take a moderate quantity of strong drink day by day, at regular periods: in the morning immediately before dinner, or in the evening. Labouring men in this country are to a great extent, accustomed to use ardent spirits, at certain given

times of the day; considering them as necessary to recruit their strength, which is supposed to be wasted by their toil. Some of them, less attentive to particular times of drinking, demand stated quantities of strong drink, which they regard as indispensable to enable them to pursue their daily labour. Men of wealth and fashion, with nearly the same regularity, consume large quantities of wine at and after dinner. In these, and in all other cases of regular drinking, an habitual attachment to strong drink is insensibly begun, strengthened, and confirmed. The man who drinks spirits regularly, ought to consider himself as having already entered the path of habitual intoxication.

5. *Affliction also is not unfrequently a cause of drunkenness.*

The affliction here referred to, is both bodily and mental. Certain diseases of the body, it is well known, bring with them lowness of spirits, discouragement, and melancholy. The patient oftentimes resorts to the use of strong drink as a remedy for these evils; and finds in it a temporary relief from the pressure. Oftentimes the physician prescribes this remedy in form; and thus adds the sanction of his skill and character to the patient's inclination. In every case of this nature, a degree of pain is usually experienced in that part of the stomach which is sometimes called the "*second sensory.*" This is commonly relieved, at least in some degree, by the use of strong drink, taken at first in moderate quantities. The remedy, however, leaves the disease worse than it found it. To produce the desired effect, a greater quantity is soon necessary; and then a greater still. In this manner multitudes of persons become drunkards.

The mental evils which give birth to this unhappy habit are numerous. Most or all of them, however, are such as, instead of exciting, waste or destroy the energy of the mind. Of this nature are, a strong sense of irretrievable disgrace; a painful consciousness of perplexed or desperate circumstances; merited loss of esteem and affection, highly valued by ourselves; long-continued suspense concerning some important interest; final discouragement of ardent wishes, or favourite pursuits; together with several other very anxious and hopeless situations of the mind.

From the distress suffered in these and the like cases, it often betakes itself for relief to spirituous liquors. The relief is necessarily transient; and, in order to be enjoyed to any great extent, must therefore be often repeated. By this repetition the sufferer soon becomes of course habitually intemperate.

6. *A small number of persons find a cause of drunkenness in an original native appetite for strong drink.*

The number of these is so small, and the cause itself so little needs explanation, that it is unnecessary to dwell on this part of the subject.

III. *The principal evils of drunkenness are the following.*

1. *It exhibits the subject of it in the light of extreme odiousness and degradation.*

Drunkenness always deprives a man, either partially or wholly, of his reason; and very often of his bodily faculties. A man without reason, is either a maniac or a brute; and for the time presents the eye with a spectacle, more sunk than the brute, and more painful than the maniac. The loss of reason is to man, the loss of all which renders him either comfortable, respectable, or useful. How painful, how humiliating, is the sight of an idiot! How excruciating the appearance of a lunatic! How lowering to human pride and independence, to sober comtemplation and real dignity, a respectable man transformed by age or sickness into a driveller! Such a transformation the drunkard accomplishes for himself, during every period of his intoxication; and adds to all the other circumstances of degradation the peculiarly humbling and hateful one, that he has voluntarily degraded himself.

In this situation the drunkard becomes, in the literal and most emphatical sense, a fool. His conversation is that of a tongue vibrating without a mind; moving because it has been accustomed to move; lisping and babbling an imperfect, cluttered, and dragging articulation: a kind of instinctive effort, resembling that of the idiot, who, having learned to count the strokes of a clock, continued to count after the clock had ceased to go.

In the mean time many drunkards, who partially lose

their reason, set their passions on fire. All restraints in this case vanish with their reason. The mind becomes a furnace of frenzy; and the bodily powers, stimulated to more than ordinary vigour, are employed only as the instruments of rage and violence. In the former case, the man sunk down to the level of a swine. In this he converts himself into a tiger. In the former case, he became loathsome and despicable. In this, he becomes equally the object of hatred and terror.

There is however a stage in the progress of both, at which they lose alike and absolutely the powers of both body and mind. Each then becomes absolutely stupid: a mass of flesh, in which a soul once lived, thought, animated, and controlled; but from which it has fled, indignant at the brutal abuse which it has suffered. It has become palsied, lifeless, and for the period extinct, under a shock which it was unable to sustain.

2. *Drunkenness exposes the subject of it to many, and those often extreme, dangers.*

The drunkard is always exposed to be overreached and defrauded, during the seasons of his partial insanity. At these seasons many persons, devoted to the use of strong drink, are peculiarly inclined to manage business, and make bargains. The weakness, the want of self-control, and the incapacity of forming just estimates of men and things, always visible at these seasons in such men, mark them out as prey for the cheat and the sharper. Accordingly, they often take such measures to produce in them such a degree of intoxication, as they well know will effectually answer their own purposes. Without any such preconcertion, there are however always sharpers enough ready to arrest the drunkard in his intoxication, and drunkards enough to furnish them with victims. At almost all such periods the losses incurred are material, frequently they are great, and sometimes they are fatal.

At other seasons, when the intoxication is complete, the subject of it is exposed to extreme personal dangers. Few men in this situation are aware, so long as they retain a partial use of their limbs, and some faint glimmerings of understanding, how incompetent they have become to direct their own conduct with safety. Of course, they venture

without apprehension into such situations as demand the full exercise of their bodily and mental powers. Hence one of them has fallen from his horse, and broken his limbs or his neck. Another has fallen into the fire; and either terminated his life, or made himself through the remainder of it a miserable cripple. A third has lost himself in a wintry storm, and perished because he could not find the way to his own house: A fourth has fallen overboard, and been drowned. A fifth has killed himself by swallowing a larger quantity of ardent spirits than he was aware, or than his nature could sustain. By these, and many other accidents, to some or other of which the drunkard is almost always exposed, multitudes have come to an untimely end.

Nor is the danger much less to the intoxicated person of doing, without any design, and even in contradiction to his prevailing wishes, serious injuries to those around him. Not a small number of dwelling-houses have been consumed by these undesigning incendiaries. In the conflagration, the inhabitants, whoever they may have been, most frequently his family, and perhaps as frequently the drunkard himself, have perished. Who, that has the least share of sober reflection or common sense left, would not tremble at the first approach towards this terrible catastrophe?

3. *The drunkard exposes himself to many temptations, and many sins.*

Of this nature indeed are all those things which have been mentioned under the preceding heads. But beside these evils, the use of spirituous liquors produces many others. It excites, to a high degree of intenseness, most of the vehement passions of man; particularly anger and lust. As the government of reason is lost, and the power of conscience laid asleep; the passions, at all times sufficiently strong, assume with increased strength the absolute control of the man; and spur and goad him on to every crime within his reach. In this situation, it is to be remembered, he is rarely alone. Other drunkards are usually around him; whose reason is equally enfeebled, and whose passions are equally awake. Among men of strong passions and little reason disputes cannot fail to arise. In such men disputes generate anger of course. Anger here regularly issues in

quarrelling; and quarrelling terminates in maimed limbs, bloodshed, and death. A large part of the murders which have existed in this world, have grown out of intoxication.

4. *A drunkard necessarily wastes his own property.*

This he often does, as I have already observed, by the foolish and mischievous bargains which he makes during the hours of intoxication. But this is far from being all. In the mere purchase of strong drink he expends greater sums than any man, without an arithmetical calculation, would suspect; and obviously greater than moderate property can bear.

Nor is this all. A great part of his time is spent in preparing the means of intoxication; in the haunts to which he resorts for it; among his drinking companions; and in sleeping and wearing off its immediate effects. All this time would otherwise have been employed in useful business; and would have thus been the means of increasing, instead of diminishing, his property.

Nor is he less a sufferer by that gradual diminution of bodily and mental powers mentioned above. His frame and limbs are of course diseased. In this manner he becomes, at times, disabled from pursuing his business at all; and, at other times, obliged to pursue it to very little purpose. What he does in this situation is but half done; and would often have been as well or much better omitted. His judgment also and skill are equally impaired; and, instead of directing his business with success, are wasted on feeble, fruitless plans miserably executed. As these powers decay, he becomes careless, listless, and negligent of his concerns; and sees them continually declining, and himself daily approaching towards beggary, without either the power or the will to stay the deplorable progress.

Thus he voluntarily robs himself of a comfortable support in old age, and in sickness, to which he is so eminently exposed; and, at an untimely period, withers the power and wastes the means of enjoyment.

5. *The drunkard destroys his health.*

No constitution is able to resist the scorching efficacy of that liquid fire, which this slave of sense and sin incessantly swallows. Pain, sorrow, and disease, are its inevitable effects. The stomach becomes speedily too much weakened

to receive, and the appetite to relish, food; until both have been stimulated by a new draught. Speedily, the limbs complain and decay; the senses become obtuse; and all the energy of the body gradually wastes away.

In this situation also the skill of the physician and the power of medicine are rendered useless. A large proportion of all the useful medicines, those particularly which the diseases of drinking men chiefly demand, are stimulants. But these men have used one of the most powerful of all stimulants, so often and so long, that medicines of this nature cease to operate upon their constitutions with their proper sanative power. They are left therefore, in a peculiar degree, to the ravages and sufferings of disease, without the usual means of cure, alleviation, or hope.

6. *The drunkard wastes his reputation.*

*A good name is better than great riches.* It would be no small consolation therefore, to a man of this description, under the loss of his property and his health, if he could at the same time preserve his character. But, unhappily for him, his reputation is squandered faster than his property, and destroyed more suddenly than his health. Drunkenness is a sin, which, after it has once become habitual, is so rarely relinquished, as hardly to admit the feeblest hope of reformation. In a very early part of his progress, therefore, he becomes branded with the full and entire character of a *drunkard.* His reputation of course is lost at an untimely period; and his infamy is of a premature growth. But what character can be more degrading, more indicative of the loss of virtue and common sense, and of the voluntary assumption of folly and self-pollution? What name is more scandalous; more evidential that a man has left his proper rank in the creation, and sunk himself down to the level of brutes, than that of a *sot?* But on this reputation, thus wantonly and profligately wasted, hangs almost all the comfort and usefulness of men. To preserve it fresh and untainted therefore, is alike their interest and their duty: a duty indispensable; an interest which cannot be estimated. He who does not highly value it, is a fool. He who wantonly throws it away, is a madman.

7. *The drunkard destroys his reason.*

Reason has been often and justly styled "*the light of the*

*mind.*" Mr. Locke with great force and beauty styles it, "*the candle of the Lord shining within man.*" It is our only ultimate directress. Even the doctrines and precepts of revelation can be nothing to us, until reason has first discerned it to be a revelation; and determined the real import of its precepts and doctrines. Still more absolutely is it the arbiter of all our ordinary concerns. For these we have no other guide, and can submit them to no other control. In a word, reason makes us men; and without it we should be brutes.

But this invaluable possession, this essence of his character as a human being, himself, his all, the drunkard rapidly wastes away.

8. *The drunkard destroys his usefulness.*

This evil is dreadfully involved in the loss of his property, health, reputation, and reason. The perpetual degradation with which he daily appears to the eyes of those around him, not only forbids the esteem and confidence which are indispensable to the attainment of useful business; but renders him an object of abhorrence and loathing. Thus, without reputation to recommend him to others, or property, or even inclination, to befriend them; with health and reason so decayed as to be unable to befriend himself; he ceases to be of any serious use to either. Of course he becomes a burden, a nuisance, a calamity, to the world. *Good would it have been for this man if he had never been born.*

In the mean time, sunk and lost as he is, he continues and usually for a length of time, to be a merry and jovial haunter of taverns and dram-shops; and, like a vessel of variolous matter occasionally opened, spreads from day to day a pestilential contagion through the clusters of miserable wretches who frequent these dangerous resorts. Few men injure a community more dreadfully than a drunkard. The sin which peculiarly constitutes his character, is almost wholly derived from example. Every such example therefore is the real cause of extending the evil to succeeding generations, as well as of corrupting his contemporaries. Were the injuries of mankind to receive their real deserts, Newgate would exchange many of its present tenants for the mischievous slaves of strong drink.

9. *The drunkard ruins his family.*

In this comprehensive and affecting article, several particulars merit the most serious consideration.

First; *He spreads through his family the habit of intoxication.*

The influence of parental example, especially when an evil example, I have already had occasion particularly to unfold. In the present melancholy case, all the power of such an example is felt to the utmost. It is an example seen daily, in the house and in the parent. It is seen by children so soon as they can see any thing; and long before their minds are capable of distinguishing its nature, or its tendency. The parent visibly regards spirituous liquors as a peculiarly interesting enjoyment of sense, at a time when they know no enjoyments but those of sense. Of course they cannot but think it eminently valuable. The means of intoxication are also provided to their hand; and their own home, so far as a dangerous and malignant influence is concerned, is changed into a dram-shop. The mother, in the mean time, not unfrequently contracts the same evil habit from the father; and thus both parents unite in the unnatural and monstrous employment of corrupting their children. What a prospect is here presented to our view! A husband and wife, to whom God has given children, to be trained up by them for heaven, united together in taking them by the hand, and leading them coolly to perdition. What heart, not made of stone, can look at such a family, without feeling exquisite distress, and the most terrible forebodings? Contemplate, for a moment, the innocent helpless beings, perfectly unconscious of their danger, and incapable of learning it, thus led as victims to the altar of a modern Moloch, less sanguinary indeed, but not less cruel, than the heathen god before whom the Israelitish parents burnt their own offspring; and say whether you most pity the children or detest the parents.

Secondly. *By squandering his property he deprives them of both comfort and respectability.*

The comfort which we enjoy in the present world, so far as the world itself is concerned, is principally found in realizing the expectations, which we have rationally and habitually formed concerning our future circumstances in life. These expectations are of course grounded on the

circumstances of our parents. We expect what we are thus taught to expect; and this naturally is, that we receive such an education, and pass through life in such a manner, as is common to the children of those who are in similar circumstances. These expectations the drunken parent gradually fritters away with the gradual diminution of his estate. The mind of the child sees, with more and more discouragement, one expected gratification vanish after another, till it ceases to expect at all; and sinks down into sullen or broken-hearted despair.

Among the evils which children suffer, *a prime one is the loss of education*, of that education I mean which is suited to their condition in life. The instructions which children receive, are a debt, which no parent can, without extreme guilt, refuse to discharge; and of which no child can be prevented, but by robbery as well as fraud. They are the chief means of his future comfort, and his future usefulness. They take him out of the list of savages, and place him in the rank of men. They form him to wisdom, to worth, and to honour. Beyond this, they open to him the gates of virtue, glory, and immortality; and point to him the path to heaven.

The most important of these instructions the parent himself is able, and therefore bound, to give; the instructions especially of a moral and religious nature, which are given and received with incomparably the greatest efficacy in the morning of life. But what instructions can a drunkard communicate? What must be the efficacy even of truth itself, proceeding from disturbed reason, a reeling frame, and a babbling tongue? With this image before him, what child can sufficiently withdraw himself from shame and anguish to learn at all? With what a contradictory and monstrous deformity of character, must religious truths and precepts be inculcated on his child by a man, imbruted by strong drink!

*The government of children* is obviously of no less importance than their instruction. But what must be the government exercised by a sot? A mixture of contradictions, imbecility, and rage; a mixture which every child six years old perfectly understands; and which no child of that age can respect or love. How can he reprove them

for their faults? His own life is nothing but a tissue of faults. How can he enjoin upon them virtuous conduct? His own life is a perpetual war upon virtue. How can he recommend to them religion? His whole character is an insult upon religion. All this his children perfectly know; and their meaning eyes, if he will look into them, will tell him the story in language unutterable.

Thirdly. *He breaks their hearts, by subjecting them to insupportable mortification.*

The drunkard presents his family with the melancholy sight of an intoxicated parent: an image always before their eyes; an image which sinks them in the dust; an image which overwhelms them in despair. What child can look at such an object, and remember that this object is his parent, without a broken heart?

The distresses thus experienced he renders double-edged by his own fretful and passionate temper. All drunkards almost assume this temper of course; and in this manner become intolerable nuisances to those with whom they are most intimately connected. The house of a drunkard is always the seat of discontent and turmoil. The sufferings of his family soon become too great to be borne with patience. Complaints, which nature cannot stifle, beget criminations, reproaches, abuses, and quarrels; terminating not unfrequently in wounds, bloodshed, and death.

In this manner the *temper* of his family is ruined. They are taught, and in a sense forced, to become hostile to each other; and prepared to become enemies to mankind. At the same time, they are rendered uncomfortable to themselves; and, should they have families of their own, are made curses to them also.

Their spirits, in the mean time, are broken down by an unceasing consciousness, which they cannot escape, that their disgrace, in all its complication, is known and published wherever *they* are known. *The head*, at least, of their domestic body, *is* not only distressingly but scandalously *sick*; and sick with a hopeless, as well as shameful, disease. The *members*, in greater or less degrees, *suffer* with the head; and, for their lower, suffer inexpressibly.

To all these things ought to be added their continual ap-

prehension, that their husband, and parent, will come to some dreadful disaster, or to an untimely end, by some one of that numerous train of accidents to which he is daily exposed; and the terrible conviction, that should he even escape these evils, he is still going regularly onward to final perdition. This consummation of evils they are compelled to expect, with an assurance little short of absolute knowledge; and cannot fail to tremble in the morning, lest the dreadful event should arrive before the close of the day.

10. *The drunkard destroys his life.*

The drunkard is as really a suicide, as if he compassed his death by the pistol or the halter. The difference is principally, that the destruction is slower, and accomplished by a long succession of sins, and not by one bold and desperate effort of turpitude; and that the drunkard, instead of aiming at his life, aims merely at the gratification of his appetite: while the suicide makes his own destruction his prime purpose. The drunkard is a negligent, the suicide an intentional, self-murderer. Often indeed the drunkard destroys himself in a moment. Often, as I have already observed, he falls from his horse, or into the fire, or into the water, or is brought to an untimely end by some other fatal accident. Most usually however he wastes gradually the taper of life before the time; and thus cuts off one fourth, one third, or one half, of his *accepted time:* even while he lives, by his desperate progress in sin, he terminates all his hopes of salvation.

11. *The drunkard ruins his soul.*

It has been heretofore observed, that the drunkard destroys his reason. In this manner he is unfitted for all profitable use of the means of grace, and for all attention to eternal life. Every call of mercy finds him stupid and regardless. To every threatening his ears are deaf: to every promise his heart is insensible. The power of motives he knows not how to feel: and even their nature he cannot comprehend. To temptations, on the contrary, he is always exposed, alive, and awake. Around him, therefore, temptations throng, and every temper fastens on him as his prey. Sin, of course, becomes his business; and *he draws iniquity as with a cart rope.*

In the mean time he is, beyond most other men, hopeless

of reformation. The hopeless condition of a sot is proverbial. Amendment in this case is so rare, as scarcely to admit belief. Indeed heaven seems to have stamped this sin almost always with reprobation. To complete his miserable condition, he is cut off from prayer. No person who intends to sin can pray. No person who intends to tempt himself, as the drunkard always does, can say, *Lead me not into temptation; but deliver me from evil:* and no person who cannot pray can be saved. Thus the drunkard holds out to his family, and to the world, the deplorable spectacle of a sinner, hardened beyond the common measure, exposing himself to sin of every kind, and in every degree, and yet voluntarily depriving himself of the usual means of repentance; hastening to perdition, and yet closing his eyes to the danger of the precipice on which he stands, and to the terrors of the gulf which opens beneath.

IV. *I shall now endeavour summarily to point out the means of avoiding this dreadful evil.*

1. *Among these means, it will be readily seen, must be the avoidance of the causes by which intoxication is solicited or encouraged.*

Most of these causes may ordinarily be avoided, by a little care, and a little resolution. No persons, except the family of the drunkard, are obliged to be present, unless casually, to examples of this nature. No person is necessitated to frequent the places in which, or company of the persons by whom, this evil habit is encouraged. Every man can avoid regular drinking. That all this is the duty of every man, a duty of the most pressing kind, will not be questioned. Every thing here depends *on resisting* or avoiding *the beginnings of evil.*

Peculiarly is it the duty and wisdom of all men to abstain from the haunts of drunkenness, from drinking companions, and from regular drinking. Almost all habits of intoxication are originated by one or other of these causes. He who becomes familiar with these temptations, is advancing to perdition with his eyes open.

2. *The man who finds in himself any peculiar relish for spirituous liquors is bound to abstain from them wholly.*

The relish for these increases invariably with every in-

stance and degree of indulgence. To cherish it therefore, is to make ourselves drunkards; and it is cherished most efficaciously by repeated drinking. No man will do this who is not a fair candidate for Bedlam.

3. *All persons who have already begun the habit of intoxication, are bound to desist, absolutely, from all use of strong drink.*

Every effort at gradual reformation will only cheat him who makes it. At first it may seem to promise something, but it will soon be found to perform nothing of any use. The candidate for reformation will speedily find himself more entangled than ever, and at a greater distance from the reformation intended. Hard as the case may be, he must break off at once, or be ruined.

4. *Persons not peculiarly in danger of this evil, are nevertheless bound scrupulously to guard against it.*

No reputation, no wisdom, nor hardly any worth, will secure man against drunkenness. The sin is found in the cottage, and in the palace; in the study of the philosopher, and in the sacred desk; in the hall of council, and on the bench of justice; and, contrary to what would seem the dictates of nature, as well as delicacy, in the female sex; even in instances where distinction, understanding, amiableness, and refinement, would appear to forbid even the suspicion. In most, if not all, of these cases, the evil creeps insensibly on the unhappy subject, and overcomes him before he is aware. A prime object to be here regarded, is therefore, *to keep the danger always before our eyes.* We are ever to feel that we ourselves are in danger, and to consider an habitual, a lively dread of it, as our first safety. We are to form also vigorous and standing resolutions, that we will not be overcome. These we are invariably to form in the fear of God; with a solemn recollection of his presence; with an humble dependance on him to bless us; and with fervent supplications for his blessing. To strengthen our resolutions, and to keep our fears awake, we are to mark the miserable victims of this sin with anxiety and terror; to regard the sin itself as *the highway to hell;* and to realize, that in yielding to it we seal our own reprobation.

To all this conduct motives can never be wanting. Mul-

titudes, of the highest import, and the most commanding efficacy, have been already suggested in the progress of this discourse. Every heart in this house, which is not formed of adamant, must have felt their force. Nothing pleads for it, except the mere appetite for strong drink: an appetite usually unnatural, and created by casual indulgence. All things else in heaven and in earth exclaim against it with a single voice. Our health, our reputation, our safety, our reason, our usefulness, our lives, our souls, our families, and our friends, in solemn and affecting union, urge, entreat, and persuade us to obtain. God commands; Christ solicits; the Spirit of grace influences; us to abstain. Angels and glorified saints behold our conduct with such anxiety and alarm as happy beings can feel; and watch and hope to see our escape. The law with a terrible voice thunders in our ears that dreadful denunciation, "Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Even hell itself, hostile as it is to our salvation, follows the rest of the universe; and, in spite of its own malevolence, subjoins its dreadful admonition, by marshalling before us the innumerable hosts of miserable wretches, whom this sin has driven to its mansions of despair. Who, that does not already sleep the sleep of death, can refuse to hear, awake, and live?

# SERMON CXIX.

## SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

### THE ORIGIN, NATURE, AND BENEFITS, OF MARRIAGE.

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*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*—EXOD. XX. 14.

BEFORE I enter upon the direct consideration of the precept in the text, it will be useful, for the purpose of illustrating and enforcing it, to examine the nature of *marriage*. The sin immediately forbidden in the text derives, in some respects, its existence from this *institution*; and is, in all respects, intimately connected with it, in whatever manner or degree the *sin* may exist. Such an examination also derives particular importance from the fact, that it has been rarely made in the desk. Indeed, I do not know where it has been made in such a manner as to satisfy my own wishes.

In discussing this subject I shall consider,

I. *The origin;*

II. *The nature;* and,

III. *The benefits; of marriage.*

I. *The origin of marriage is from God.*

In other words, *marriage is a divine institution.*

The proof of this position is complete in the following passage, Matt. xix. 3—6. *The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female; and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.*

In this passage of Scripture our Saviour declares, that when God had created man male and female, he said, *For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh.* These, it is ever to be remembered, are the words of God himself; as they are here declared to be by Christ; and not, as they have often been erroneously supposed to be, the words of Adam. God made man male and female for this end; and in these words delivered his own ordinance to mankind; at once permitting and directing, that a man henceforth should leave his father and mother; and *that* lawfully, notwithstanding his high and otherwise indissoluble obligations to them; and be united to his wife. Accordingly, he declares them henceforth to be no more twain but one.

That these words contain an institution of God, and that this institution is marriage, cannot be doubted for a moment. The only question which can be asked concerning the subject is, for whom was this institution designed? Plainly it was not designed for Adam and Eve; for they had neither father nor mother; and were therefore not included in the terms of the ordinance; and being already married by God himself, were necessarily excluded from any ordidance succeeding that event. The ordinance then respected their posterity only; and, as it is delivered in absolutely indifferent terms, terms unrestricted to any individuals or collections of mankind, it respected all their posterity alike.

In this manner it is directly explained by our Saviour in the passage quoted above. The Pharisees asked him, *whether it* was *lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause.* Christ replies, that, in consequence of this institution, a man and his wife are no more twain, but one; that is, a man and his wife, *at the time in which he was speaking, and from the time when this ordinance was made,* are no more twain, but from the day of their marriage are by this ordinance constituted one. Accordingly he subjoins, *What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.* As if he said, "God hath joined together by this ordinance all men and women who are lawfully married; or, in other words, every lawfully married pair." Man therefore cannot lawfully disjoin

them. Here it is evident beyond a debate, that our Saviour pronounced *men to be married, or joined together, at the time when he made these declarations, by God himself in this ordinance.* Of course, the ordinance extends to all lawfully married persons.

II. *The nature of marriage may be explained in the following manner.*

*Marriage is a union between two persons of the different sexes.* It is carefully to be remembered, that *the ordinance of God which gave birth to it, limits the union to two.* God said, *For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife;* not, *Men shall leave their fathers and mothers, and shall cleave unto their wife;* nor, *A man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wives, and they twain shall be one:* not *they indefinitely, without declaring how many;* nor, *they three, four, or five; but they twain.* The ordinance therefore on which alone marriage is lawfully founded, limits this union, in the most express and definite manner, to two persons. What God has thus established, man cannot alter.

*It is the most intimate union which exists in the present world.* The persons who are thus united, are joined together in a more intimate relation than any other which exists, or can exist among mankind. No attachment is so strong, no tenderness is so great, as that which is originated and cherished by this institution. This is directly predicted, and very forcibly declared, in the passage which I have quoted from St. Matthew. *For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one.* Accordingly, the union of affections, interests, labours, and life, here existing, has no parallel in the present world.

*It is also a perpetual union.* The connexion is entered into by both parties for life. God has constituted it by joining the parties with his own infinite authority; and has forbidden man to put them asunder. It is indissoluble therefore on any ground but that of crime: a crime of one kind only; and in its nature fatal to all the blessings and hopes intended by the institution.

*It is a union also formed by a most solemn covenant.*

In this covenant God is appealed to, as a witness of the sincere affection and upright designs of the parties; both of whom engage mutually the exercise of those affections, and the pursuit of that conduct, which together are the most efficacious means of their mutual happiness. This covenant plainly approaches very near to the solemnity and obligation of an oath; and, exclusively of that in which man gives himself up to God, is without a doubt the most solemn and the most important, ever entered into by man. When the duties of it are faithfully performed, they furnish a fair foundation for the best hopes, that the union will be immortal.

III. *The benefits of this institution are incalculably numerous, and inestimably important.*

This truth is clearly evident from the observations already made concerning the origin and nature of marriage. It is also forcibly evinced by the manner in which the subject is elsewhere exhibited in the Scriptures.

The violation of the marriage-covenant was of such consequence in the view of the divine mind, that it was made the subject of one of the commands in the decalogue.

In the laws concerning this subject, given to the Israelites, curses were pronounced in form against the direct violations of the marriage-vow; and the violaters were punished with death.

Of adulterers, and all other transgressors of the seventh command, it is declared in the New Testament, that *they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. None of those who go in to the strange woman,* says Solomon, *turn again; neither take they hold of the paths of life.*

The relation between Christ and his church is, throughout the Scriptures, exhibited as a marriage. God says to his church, *Thy Maker is thy husband;* JEHOVAH OF HOSTS *is his name.* The angel in the Revelation styles the church *the bride, the Lamb's wife.*

From these and other similar exhibitions of this subject in the Scriptures, it must necessarily be supposed, that God regarded marriage as pre-eminently important and beneficial to mankind.

The benefits of marriage however, like those of every other practical concern, are chiefly to be learned from facts. I shall therefore apply directly to that extensive source of information; and exhibit, with a brief survey, such of these benefits unfolded by human experience, as the present opportunity will permit.

1. *Marriage is extensively the means of comfort to the married pair.*

This was originally proposed by God as an important end of the institution. *And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.* Accordingly, this end has been regularly accomplished from the beginning.

Licentious men, both of ancient and modern times, have carried on a course of open and incessant hostility against this institution; as they have indeed against all the real interests of mankind. In the progress of this warfare, they have arraigned the wisdom and denied the benefits of it; charged upon it evils which it does not produce; and enhanced those which are incident to the marriage-state. The unhappy marriages which have been contracted, in violation of the law of our nature and of the Scriptures, comparatively few in number, and only exceptions to the general truth under discussion, they have multiplied without consideration or integrity; and have brought them up to public view as just exhibitions of the marriage-state in general. In a word, they have treated this subject as they customarily treat others of a serious nature: they have mistated facts; they have sophisticated arguments; and where neither would answer their purpose, they have endeavoured to accomplish it by contempt, sneers, and ridicule.

This conduct, censurable and mischievous as it is, is perhaps not to be wondered at in men of such a character. But it is to be wondered at, that men of a far better character should have followed their steps. A man of even moderate reflection must be equally surprised and wounded, to see how many, otherwise respectable, writers in the peculiarly enlightened kingdom of Great Britain have, in a greater or less degree, lent their names to foster the wretched calumnies and falsehoods heaped so undeservedly upon this subject.

That there are unhappy marriages, and the number of them is considerable, I am not disposed to question. There are many persons, whose passions are too violent, or whose temper is too sordid, to permit them to be happy in any situation. Persons marry, at times, whose dispositions are wholly incompatible with each other. There are vicious persons, who will neither be happy themselves, nor suffer others to be happy. All these, it is readily conceded, will find little happiness in the marriage-state.

The propensities inwrought into our nature as a law, and the declarations of Scripture, teach us alike, and irresistibly, that this union is to be formed only on the ground of affection, regulated by prudence. On this plan, and on this only, can marriage be reasonably expected to be happy. We are not therefore to wonder, that persons who marry for the purposes of allying themselves to families of distinction; acquiring or repairing fortunes; obtaining rank; or gratifying in any manner, ambition, avarice, or sensuality; should afterward find themselves unhappy. These persons do not intentionally marry either husbands or wives. They marry distinction, fortunes, titles, villas, luxury, and grandeur. The objects to which they intentionally unite themselves they acquire. It cannot be wondered at, that they do not gain those which they never sought; nor that they do not find the blessings of marriage, following plans and actions which, unless incidentally, have no relation to marriage. These persons, it is true, find the objects to which they are really wedded, encumbered by beings who stand in the places of husbands and wives. Still, they cannot form even a pretence for complaining; since, with their eyes open, they voluntarily subject themselves, for the sake of such gratifications, to all the evils arising out of the encumbrance. The person who wishes to obtain the blessings, designed by this or any other institution of God, must intentionally conform to the nature and spirit of the institution itself; and to all the precepts concerning it, by which he has manifested his own pleasure.

I have lived in very many families, and those often in plain as well as polished life. With very many more, extensively diversified in character and circumstances, I have been intimately acquainted. By the evidence arising from

these facts, I am convinced, that the great body of married persons are rendered more happy by this union; and are as happy as their character and circumstances could permit us to expect. Poverty cannot, whether in the married or single state, enjoy the pleasures of wealth; avarice, those of generosity; ambition, those of moderation; ignorance, those of knowledge; vulgarity, those of refinement; passion, those of gentleness; nor vice, in whatever form, those of virtue. The evils here specified, marriage, it is true, cannot remove. Nor are they removable by celibacy; and, where these evils exist, neither celibacy nor marriage can confer the contrary blessings. *Grapes here will not grow upon thorns, nor figs upon thistles.* Nothing but folly can lead us to expect, that this institution will change the whole nature of those who enter into it; and, like a magical spell, confer knowledge, virtue, and loveliness, upon beings who have neither.

2. *Another end of this institution is the preservation and comfort of children.*

The experience of all ages and countries, so far as it has extended to this subject, has uniformly shewn, that the offspring of illicit concubinage suffer innumerable evils, to which those born in wedlock are not subjected. In a prodigious multitude of instances, they perish before, or immediately after, they are born. In a vast multitude of others, they die in the early periods of childhood. They suffer from hunger, cold, nakedness, negligence, the want of nursing, watching, medicine, and every other comfort of life. The peculiar affection of married parents, and the peculiar efforts to which it gives birth, have ever been indispensable to the preservation of children from these evils, the establishment of their health, and the continuance of their lives. Children need ten thousand supplies, cares, and tendernesses, which nothing but this affection will ever furnish; and without which they either die suddenly, or waste away with a lingering dissolution.

This work of raising up children from infancy to manhood, is the most laborious of all our worldly concerns; and requires more efforts both of body and mind, more toil, care, patience, and perseverance, than any other. To most men, indeed, it is a great part of all which ordinarily they find to do in their secular business.

For this great work, God, with wisdom which can never be sufficiently admired, has made effectual provision by the parental tenderness always existing and flourishing in married parents, with so few exceptions as to demand no attention here; but always withered and commonly destroyed by promiscuous concubinage. This tenderness, neither time nor toil, neither care nor anxiety, neither trouble nor disappointment, neither filial ingratitude nor filial profligacy, can overcome, exhaust, or discourage. Other affections become cold, wearied, and disheartened; and are often converted into negligence or hatred. But this, like the celestial fire in the Jewish temple, burns by night and by day; and is, through this world, an everlasting flame, which cannot be extinguished. Without it, what would become of children in poverty, in their rebellion, and in their profligacy? Who would watch over them; who relieve, supply, endure, and forgive?

In promiscuous concubinage, children would be left to the mercy of the world; to the supplies of accident; to the charity of the street; to the bleak and desolate waste; to the frozen hospital; and to the inclemencies of the sky; to pine with hunger; to chill with nakedness; to shrivel with unkindness; to consume with premature disease; to die an untimely death; and, denied a grave, now the privilege even of beggars, to feed the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven.

3. *This institution is the source of all the natural relations of mankind.*

By these I mean the relations of husband and wife (which in a subordinate sense may be called natural); those of parents and children, of brothers and sisters, together with many others which are of considerable, although of inferior, importance. These relations are immensely more interesting and useful to the world, than any, nay than all, others. They connect mankind by bonds far more intimate, delightful, and enduring; resist incomparably more the irregular, evil, and stormy passions of man; soften his rugged nature; overthrow his violent purposes; and spread through the world a degree of peace and moderation, which without them would be impossible.

4. *This institution is the source of all the gentle and useful natural affections.*

These are conjugal tenderness, parental love, filial piety,

and brotherly and sisterly attachment; far the most amiable, endearing, permanent, and useful, native affections of man. No other affections have originally any softn,sse sweetness, or loveliness; but all owe to these every thing which is of this nature. All our native amiableness is awakened by the presence of those whom we love: and we originally love those only, who form the domestic circle within which we were born; those from whom we early received the offices of tenderness. Here natural affection first springs. Here also it grows and flourishes; and from its stem, deeply rooted here, sends abroad its boughs and branches, its blossoms and fruits. The mind here, strengthened and refined, begins to wander abroad into the neighbourhood, to find new objects for attachment in other families. Relations less near easily slide into affections; and are enrolled by it in the list of those whom it loves. To these succeed, in their turns, a train of friends, neighbours, and countrymen; until the sphere swells beyond the limits of its comprehension. What would this world be without these affections, and without the conduct to which they give birth? Nothing good would ever be begun; much less be carried on and conducted to a prosperous conclusion. But these affections commence, are cherished, and confirmed, in families only; and without them would either never exist at all, or be mere abortions.

5. *This institution is the source of all industry and economy.*

Industry is the source, and economy the preservation, of all the comfortable subsistence of man. But industry, as is proverbially observed, is not natural to the human race. On the contrary, it is the result of education and habit only. Accordingly, the savages of all countries, being uneducated to industrious exertion, are lazy in the extreme; and are roused to toil only by the calls of hunger. This habit cannot even be begun, as the education, whence it is derived; cannot exist to any considerable extent, but in families; nor by any other persons, except parents; nor at any other period, beside childhood. Without families, indeed, industry would not exist; and without industry the world would be a desert.

Economy is not less necessary to human comfort than

industry; and is still more unnatural to man. It demands the attention of every day to those things which we are to preserve; and this attention is more irksome than labour itself. Fewer persons overcome their reluctance to it. Savages are always squanderers. Exposed as they perpetually are to want and famine, and frequently and distressingly as they suffer from these evils, such is their reluctance to this employment, that they go on from age to age, wasting, suffering, and perishing.

Early, watchful, and long-continued education, will alone establish a habit either of industry or economy. The attention, the authority, and the example, of parents, are all equally and indispensably necessary to the creation of this habit; and, without them all, it cannot in any extensive manner exist. Savages indeed have families, and are married parents. It may therefore be asked, why their children are not educated to these habits? The answer I have already given. Neither the attention, authority, nor example, of savage parents, are at all exerted for this end, so far as their male children are concerned; and very imperfectly with respect to those of the other sex. Of these, however, both the industry and economy fully answer to the degree of education which they receive; and to the opportunities which they enjoy of exercising them. My position is, that without a domestic education these things would never exist; not that that education, be it what it may, or that a mere domestic existence, will give them birth. Besides, savage parents neither understand nor perform the great body of duties created by this institution. Yet even they, in these as well as in other important particulars, derive real and considerable advantages from the domestic state.

Without industry and economy, what would become of mankind? Their enjoyments, their improvements, their virtues, and their hopes, would all vanish at once; nay, their very subsistence would disappear. The earth, within a few years, would be emptied of ninety-nine hundredths of its inhabitants. Europe would be changed into a [illegible] land waste; and these states into a Patagonian forest.

6. *This institution is the source of all education in useful knowledge, and to civility and sweetness of manners.*

Parents are the only persons who love children sufficiently well to be anxious about their education in any thing. Nor would any others support them while obtaining their education. No others would teach them those indispensable things which they learn at home. By whom are schools built? By a collection of families. By whom are the instructors supported? By a collection of families assembled in a neighbourhood. By whom are colleges erected; instructors sustained; libraries furnished; and other means of superior education supplied? By large collections of families; such collections as have actually raised *these* buildings; stocked them with all their furniture; and sent hither the youths who are now before me for education.

Education occupies a great part of childhood and youth; and is a long-continued, laborious, expensive, and often a discouraging, concern. Ordinary feelings would supply neither the labour nor the expense. Parents only experience the necessary affection. Families only could sustain the necessary expense.

Much of the education of children is furnished by example; and is dependant on the propensity to imitation. This principle operates powerfully upon children in the early periods of life, because it is stronger at that than at any future age; and because they are continually in the midst of those whose example they are most disposed to follow, both from peculiar affection, and from the fact that it is always before them.

But the efficacy of this principle operates powerfully also in another way. Parents love to be like other parents, and to have their children like other children. When therefore the children of one family are furnished with the advantages of education; the parents of other children in the neighbourhood are prompted to educate them also; not only by ambition, but by the general disposition which we have to be like others.

At the same time, and under the same authority of parents, civility and softness of manners are begun and established in families. Here only arise the affections, out of which this ornamental part of the human character springs. In no other place, among no other persons, and

in no other circumstances, can these affections find their proper objects, or their proper motives. Of course, in no other place can they begin to exist. Much less can they elsewhere find room for that continual exercise, that delightful interchange, which is absolutely necessary to their strength and permanency. From families only, therefore, can the world derive the innumerable blessings flowing from these sources.

7. *This institution is the source of all subordination and government; and, consequently, of all order, peace, and safety, in the world.*

In a family, children are taught, as soon as they are taught any thing, to obey; and to obey those who loving them tenderly are the fit, and the only fit, persons to govern them, or to teach them submission and obedience. Others would rule them only with the rod of power; with a despotism from which they would think it a privilege to escape; a dominion from which, as soon as possible, they would revolt; an authority which they would hate; and submission to which would be such an evil, as naturally to make them hate all other authority.

But parents rule with tenderness and love; and usually engage the strong affection of children to the authority which they exercise, and to themselves while exercising it. The children learn to obey from choice; and are pleased with the very employment of obeying.

Obedience is also taught here in that early period of life, at which it is impressed so deeply as never to be effaced. Impressions of every kind made at this period are, it is well known, indelible, and survive all others; especially when made by those in whom tenderness and authority are united, and to whom reverence and affection are rendered in the highest degree. This, however, is not all. These impressions are daily and hourly repeated; and by this repetition are gradually wrought into an immoveable habit. In this manner they become the only visible nature of the child; and constitute his chief, and often his only, character.

In this manner, and only in this manner, are children effectually prepared to submit to all other lawful authority. In this manner they become peaceful and orderly through life; imbibe a spirit of respect and kindness towards others; are

formed into good members of society, and fitted to sustain the character of good neighbours and good friends. Equally necessary is this discipline to make them good subjects and good magistrates. Few persons are good subjects of civil government, who have not been trained to this character by a wise domestic administration; and not one of these would sustain this character, but for the example of those who have been thus trained. It is proverbially true also that none are qualified to govern, except those who have early learned to obey.

In hardly any thing is the institution of marriage, and the consequent formation of families, exhibited as more necessary or more wise, than in this origination and establishment of good order in the world. "Order (as Mr. Pope has justly observed) is Heaven's first law." The great task of establishing it among such beings as we are; selfish, revolting, and refractory; God has assigned to an innumerable multitude of hands: a multitude sufficiently great to receive it in portions so small and so circumstanced, as to ensure both the ability and the inclination to accomplish it effectually. These portions are so small as to involve only the children of a single family. To this little flock are given regularly two rulers, better disposed and better qualified, in almost all instances, than any other persons found in the world. The circumstances in which those are placed who are to be governed, are more favourable to the accomplishment of this great end, than any others can be. Their infancy, childhood, and youth, in succession; their ignorance, feebleness, dependance; the affection, superiority, care, and kindness, of the parents; and the instinctive love and reverence of the children; together with their necessary and long-continued residence in the parental mansion; present to the contemplative eye a combination of things evidencing, by their supreme and singular adaptation to this important purpose, a glorious work of the wisdom of God. Fewer hands could not possibly accomplish this mighty task. All the wisdom of legislation, all the energy of despotism, would be spent upon it in vain. Millions of minds, and tongues, and hands, are indispensable to it, even in a single country. It is beyond calculation a greater and more arduous work, than all the labours of all rulers,

legislative, executive, and judicial, united. Nor could those to whom it is intrusted, accomplish it in any other circumstances. Children, grown up to manhood without government, could never be governed. A generation of such children would set at defiance all the laws and magistrates in the universe; and would never yield to any control but that of the sword. Were parents to intermit their labours during a single generation, no government could thenceforth exist in that country, until terrible necessity should force upon it a military despotism. Anarchy, until that period, would rear its wild misrule, ravage every human interest, and rase every human dwelling. In this very land, flourishing and wantoning in all the blessings of liberty, the musket, the dungeon, and the gibbet, would be the only means of public peace, order, and safety.

8. *Marriage is the source of all the religion which exists in the world.*

This important truth is completely evident from the following particulars.

In the first place, *persons living in promiscuous concubinage, are never themselves religious.*

There never was a single instance of this nature since the world began. The very first step towards religion, whenever they have ultimately become religious, has invariably been repentance and reformation of this enormous sin. Such persons can therefore never teach their children religion, either by precept or example. Therefore,

Secondly. *Their children grow up, of course, in irreligion.*

There are two primary means of grace: the preaching of the gospel, and the religious education of children. Of these, Baxter supposes religious education to be probably the principal as to its efficacy, wherever the gospel is regularly established. But, whatever be their comparative importance, it is sufficient to say, what cannot be denied, that children who are not educated religiously, rarely become religious, even in the midst of those who are thus educated; and that a generation of such children would, of course, be a generation of profligates. But married persons only ever educate their children religiously; or present to them that example without which their instructions would be given to no purpose.

Thirdly. *None but married parents build churches, support ministers, or frequent the worship of God.*

That the irreligion of persons living in promiscuous concubinage would never give birth to these things, nor to any of them, needs no proof. But without all these things, religion, as the world is constituted, cannot exist. The loss of the sabbath alone soon becomes every where the loss of religion. The preaching of the gospel, united with the ordinances of public worship, is the only effectual means of keeping religious education alive in the world. Religious education, in its turn, gives existence and life to public worship; and both united, are the great and efficacious means of continuing the kingdom of God, and producing the salvation of man.

Such, in a summary view, are *the origin, the nature,* and *the benefits, of marriage.* No man of common sobriety can hesitate to acknowledge, that these benefits are inestimable and immense. Of course, the institution whence they were derived, and without which they would not exist, is of incomprehensible importance to mankind. How worthy of the wisdom of the infinite mind, is the erection of so vast and so glorious a fabric, upon a foundation so simple, apparently so inadequate, and yet proved, by all the experience of man, to be sufficiently extensive, solid, and enduring! How small a cause, to the human eye, is here seen to produce effects, innumerable in their multitude, and supreme in their importance! What serious mind can hesitate to acknowledge, that such a work is wrought by the counsel of God!

# SERMON CXX.

## SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

### LEWDNESS.

*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*—EXOD. XX. 14.

HAVING in the preceding discourse considered *the origin, nature, and benefits, of marriage;* the institution which is the basis of the prohibition of the text; I shall now proceed to examine *the prohibition itself.*

The thing which is here universally prohibited, is *lewdness:* lewdness in every form; in thought, word, and action. This is unanswerably evident from our Saviour's comment on this precept. *He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

Before I begin the immediate discussion of this subject, I shall premise a few general observations.

It is universally known, that there is, and for a great length of time has been, a rivetted prejudice against the introduction of this subject into the desk. When the peculiar delicacy attending it is considered, it cannot be thought strange, that such a prejudice should in some degree exist. Even the most chaste and correct observations concerning it are apt to give pain; or at least to excite an alarm in a refined and apprehensive mind. What nature itself perhaps dictates, custom and manners have not a little enhanced. The opinions and feelings to which I have referred, have been carried to a length unwarranted either by the Scriptures or common sense. The subject seems in fact to have been banished from the desk: and ministers, by their general and profound silence concerning it, appear to have sanctioned the conclusion, that there is one, and that not a small part of Scripture, which, so far as preach-

ing is concerned, is not *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, nor for instruction in righteousness.*

But let me solemnly ask every religious man, whether this conduct can be justified. The *rejoicing* of St. Paul at the close of his life, was *the testimony of a good conscience, that not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had his conversation in the world, the testimony of a good conscience, that he was pure from the blood of all men, because he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.* Is it not a plain and prominent part of the counsel of God, to forbid, to discourage, to prevent, this profligate conduct of mankind? Why else was this precept inserted in the decalogue; and promulgated amid the lightnings of Sinai? Why else is it throughout the Scriptures made the subject of such forcible prohibitions, and the object of such awful threatenings?

What reason can be given, why should it not be introduced into the desk? Can common sense either prove or discern the usefulness of excluding it? Is it fit, is it safe, is it not preposterous, is it not ruinous, to the best interests of mankind, to leave the whole management of it to loose and abandoned men; and to suffer them, from year to year, and from century to century, to go on in a course of corruption; seducing and destroying thousands and millions, especially of the young, the gay, and the giddy: while we, ministers of Christ, divinely appointed to watch for the souls of men, quietly sit by, and see them hurried on to perdition? Shall we be awed by the cry of indelicacy, originally raised by the most indelicate of mankind, only to keep the field open for its own malignant occupancy? Shall we not infinitely rather lay hold on every opportunity, and all the means furnished here, as well as elsewhere, to rescue our fellow-creatures from destruction?

And shall not the house of God, and this sacred day; both divinely consecrated, not only to his worship at large, but to this very end, that *the wicked* may be warned *of the error of his way, that he turn from it, and save his soul alive;* shelter this subject, a solemn prominent subject of his own express commands, awful exhortations, and terrible threatenings, from misconception, sport, and sneer? Shall not the known presence of this tremendous Being in his house si-

lence every unscriptural complaint; check every wayward thought; forbid every roving of an unhallowed imagination; and appal every light-minded sinner; however prone he may be to forget the presence of his Maker; or unwilling to remember, that this great Being is at the very time *searching his heart, and trying his reins, to reward him according to his works?*

But why, it may be asked, may not the evil be left to other correctives? Why is it necessary, that ministers of the gospel should make it the theme of their public discourses? Why may not the business of reformation be intrusted to the satirist, the poet, and the moralist; to private conversation, and to the religious instruction of parents? The answer to these questions is at hand. God has required ministers to *cry aloud and spare not, to lift up their voices as a trumpet, and to shew his people their transgressions.* He has declared to ministers, that if *they warn not the wicked of his way, the wicked shall die in his sins; but his blood he will require at their hands.* The point in debate must, I think, be allowed to be here finally settled; unless some argument can be devised to shew, that a minister is bound to make himself answerable for the blood of those sinners to whom he preaches. Besides, the satirist, the poet, and the moralist, in a multitude of instances, have been enlisted on the side of vice; and have endeavoured to stimulate, rather than repress, the evil under examination. Where they are not; how few persons read their books, compared with the number of those who are present at the preaching of the gospel! Probably two thirds of a million of persons hear the gospel preached weekly in New England. Not one in a thousand of these, perhaps, has ever read a book seriously exposing this unhappy part of the human character. Even where their books are read, and read with attention, they are little regarded, and produce little effect. The desk possesses means of appalling and overthrowing vice, and upholding morality, which nothing else can boast. The day, the place, the circumstances, of the assembly; the purposes for which they are gathered; and the solemn commission of JEHOVAH; furnish ministers with advantages for this great end unrivalled and unexampled. Accordingly their office has been more efficacious in producing real re-

formation, than all the other means employed by man. "The pulpit," says a poet of distinguished excellence and wisdom.

> "The pulpit, when the sat'rist has at last,
> Strutting and vap'ring in an empty school,
> Spent all his force and made no proselyte,
> I say the pulpit, in the sober use
> Of its legitimate, peculiar powers,
> Must stand acknowledg'd, while the world shall stand,
> The most important and effectual guard,
> Support, and ornament, of virtue's cause."

With these things in view, I consider it as my own duty to bring this subject into the desk without hesitation; and to treat it in the same definite and earnest manner which is demanded by the precepts of the gospel. I shall make it my business, however, to treat it in such a manner, that if any of my audience shall entertain thoughts concerning it, forbidden by their Creator, it shall be their own fault and not mine.

With these preliminary remarks, I proceed to observe,

I. *That this command forbids all impure thoughts.*

The proof of this I have already given, in our Saviour's comment on this precept.

Impure thoughts are the immediate and only sources of impure conversation, and an impure life. If the thoughts be cleansed, the man will be clean of course.

There is scarcely a more dangerous employment, than the indulgence of a licentious imagination. This is an evil to which youths are peculiarly exposed. The peculiar strength of every passion, and the peculiar want of watchfulness and self-restraint, render them an easy prey to every vice which solicits admission. Still greater is the danger, when vice approaches under a form especially alluring; and at the same time steals gradually, and therefore insensibly, upon the mind. By all these evils is the sin under consideration accompanied. It rises in the minds of the young instinctively; surrounded with many allurements, and unaccompanied by that loathing and horror with which the

mind naturally regards vice of many other kinds. At the same time, the mind is prone to be utterly unconscious of any transgression, and of any danger. The imagination, thoughtless and unrestrained, wanders over the forbidden ground, often without thinking that it is forbidden; and has already been guilty of many and perilous transgressions, when it is scarcely aware of having transgressed at all. In this manner its attachment to these exertions continually gains strength. Continually are they repeated with more eagerness, and with more frequency. At length they become habitual: and scarcely any habit is stronger, or with less difficulty overcome. In every leisure season, the mind, if it will watch its own movements, will find itself roving without restraint, and often without being aware that it has begun to rove, on this interdicted ground; and will be astonished to perceive, after a sober computation, how great a part of all its thinking is made up of these licentious thoughts.

Most unhappily, aids and allurements to this licentious indulgence are never wanting. Genius, in every age and in every country, has, to a great extent, prostituted its elevated powers for the deplorable purpose of seducing thoughtless minds to this sin. The unsuspecting imagination, ignorant of the dangers which are spread before it, has, by this gay and fiery serpent, glittering with spots of gold, and painted with colours of enchantment, been allured to pluck the fruit of this forbidden tree, and hazard the death denounced against the transgression. The numbers of the poet, the delightful melody of song, the fascination of the chisel, and the spell of the pencil, have been all volunteered in the service of Satan, for the moral destruction of unhappy man. To finish this work of malignity, the stage has lent all its splendid apparatus of mischief; the shop been converted into a show-box of temptations; and its owner into a pander of iniquity. Feeble, erratic, and giddy, as the mind of man is in its nature; prepared to welcome temptation, and to hail every passing sin; can we wonder, that it should yield to this formidable train of seducers?

To a virtuous mind, scarcely any possession is of more value, or more productive of enjoyment or safety, than a

chastened imagination, regularly subjected to the control of the conscience. Wherever this faculty is under this control, the mind has achieved a power of keeping temptation at a distance, of resisting it when approaching, and of overcoming it when invading, attainable in no other manner. Its path towards heaven becomes, therefore, comparatively unobstructed, easy, and secure. Sin *does* not *easily beset it:* and its moral improvement, while it is on the one hand undisturbed, is on the other rapid and delightful.

II. *This command forbids all licentious words of the same nature.*

Impure thoughts beget impure words; and impure words, in their turn, generate, enhance, and multiply, impure thoughts. This retro-active influence of the tongue upon the heart, by means of which sinful conversation becomes the means of producing sinful thoughts, I have had occasion to explain at large in a former discourse. It will therefore be unnecessary to dwell upon it here. No serious observer of human life can doubt, that by our own language as well as that of others, whenever it is impure, impure thoughts are awakened; a licentious imagination set on fire; and licentious designs, which otherwise would never have entered the mind, called up into existence and execution.

In this employment, also, our fellow-men unite with us in the strange and melancholy purpose of mutual corruption. All the dangers and mischiefs, all the temptations and sins, presented to each other by evil companions, are to be found here. Here *wicked men and seducers wax worse and worse; deceiving and being deceived;* mutually seducing and being seduced.

The only safety, with respect to this part of the subject in hand, is found in an exact conformity to the very forcible precept of St. Paul: *But filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting, let it not be so much as named among you.* The original words are αισχροτης, *obscenity;* μωρολογια, *impure scurrility;* and ευτραπελια, when used in a bad sense, as here, answering to *double entendres,* or seemingly *decent speeches with double meanings.* Of all these the apostle says not, *Let them not be used, but let them not be so much as named among*

*you, as becometh saints.* Let no foundation be furnished by your conversation, even for mentioning it as a fact, that such language has ever been uttered by you. For no conversation, beside that which is thus pure, can become your character as Christians. See Eph. v. 3, 4. Strict and virtuous delicacy, in our language, is not only indispensable to decency and dignity of character, but to all purity of heart, and all excellency of life.

III. *This command forbids all licentious conduct of this nature.*

As this position will be questioned; and as this conduct, in every form, is prohibited elsewhere, in a multitude of scriptural passages; I shall spare myself the labour of proof; and shall proceed to suggest *several reasons for our obedience to this precept;* or, what is the same thing, to mention *several evils arising from disobedience.*

1. *The licentious conduct forbidden by this precept, discourages and prevents marriage.*

This discouragement and prevention regularly take place in exact proportion to the prevalence of the conduct; and are therefore chargeable upon it, whenever, and wherever, and however, it exists.

The innumerable and immense blessings of the marriage-institution, have been summarily recited in the preceding discourse. They are the blessings which keep the moral world in being, and secure it from an untimely and most terrible dissolution. They are the blessings, without which life, in instances literally innumerable, would be blasted in the bud; without which, when it escaped this premature destruction, its continuance would prove a curse; without which, natural affection and amiableness would not exist; without which, domestic education would be extinct; industry and economy never begin; and man be left to the precarious subsistence of a savage. But for this institution, learning, knowledge, and refinement, would expire; government sink in the gulf of anarchy; and religion, hunted from the habitations of men, hasten back to her native heavens. Man, in the mean time, stripped of all that is respectable, amiable, or hopeful, in his character, and degraded to all that is odious, brutal, and desperate, would

prowl in solitudes and deserts to satisfy his rage and hunger. The correspondence between heaven and earth would cease; and the celestial inhabitants would no longer expect nor find new accessions to their happy society from this miserable world.

To all these evils every lewd man directly contributes. Were his principles and practices adopted universally by his fellow-men, all these evils would universally prevail. That they do not actually thus prevail, is in no sense owing to him. To the utmost of his power he labours to introduce them all.

2. *This conduct, in almost all cases, presupposes seduction.*

Seduction, in its very nature, involves fraud of the worst kind. It is probably always accomplished by means of the most solemn promises, and often with oaths still more solemn. Both the promises and oaths however are violated in a manner supremely profligate and shameful. The object to which they are directed, is base, malignant, and treacherous, in the extreme; and the manner in which it is prosecuted, is marked with the same treachery and baseness. He who can coolly adopt it, has put off the character of a man, and put on that of a fiend; and, with the spirit of a fiend alone, he pursues and accomplishes the infernal purpose. The ruin sought and achieved is immense. It is not the filching of property; it is not the burning of a house; it is not the deprivation of liberty; it is not the destruction of life. The seducer plunders the wretched victim of character, morals, happiness, hope, and heaven; enthrals her in the eternal bondage of sin; consumes her beyond the grave in endless fire; and murders her soul with an ever-living death. With the same comprehensive and terrible malignity he destroys himself; calls down upon his own head the vengeance of that almighty hand which will suffer no sinner to escape; and awakens the terrors of that undying conscience, which will enhance even the agonies of perdition. All this is perpetrated, in the mean time, under strong professions of peculiar affection; with the persuasive language of tenderness, and with the smiles of gentleness and complacency. For the seducer

"Can smile, and smile, and be a villain."

3. *It brings incomprehensible wretchedness upon the devoted object.*

No human being can support the pressure of infamy, a degradation below the level of mankind; and the envenomed stings of reproach, sharpened by a guilty conscience. I well know that philosophy prates and vapours on topics of this nature, with a proud self-complacency, and an ostentatious display of patience, fortitude, and serenity. But I also well know, that philosophy is in these respects a mere pretender, a bully, and not a hero. Philosophy never furnished, and never will furnish, its catalogue of martyrs. All its votaries, like Voltaire, intend only to rule and triumph, not to suffer, nor even to submit. As cool and parading reflections on subjects of a calamitous nature are uttered in the peace of the closet, the possession of ease and safety, the conviction of acknowledged reputation, and the enjoyment of friends, comforts, and hopes: philosophy rarely encounters real sufferings. Her hardihood is all premature, and is all shewn in telling the world what she would do, and what others ought to do; and not in the history of what she has done.

The excruciating anguish to which the miserable female victim is reduced, is dreadfully exemplified in the unnatural and enormous wickedness to which she is driven in the desertion, and the consequent destruction, of her helpless offspring. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?* is a question which points out the strongest affection, the highest tenderness of human nature; the attachment which outruns, survives, and triumphs over, every other. To this question, the exposure to a merciless sky, the drowning, the strangling, the smothering, of illegitimate children, returns a terrible and excruciating answer. What must be the agonies of despondence and degradation, which can force the susceptible heart of a female parent, to the contrivance and execution of a design like this! Yet such is the dreadful catastrophe of the wickedness in question. It is worse than trifling, for the author of all these evils to allege, that this catastrophe is neither contrived nor accomplished by himself. They are all, and all are known by him to be, the frequent, as well as natural, consequences

of this iniquity. They are chargeable to him therefore, as the legitimate results of his own conduct: results which, by every obligation, human and divine, he was bound to foresee and prevent. Both the murder itself, and the miseries which give birth to it, are stains of that crimson guilt in which he is so deeply died.

4. *This licentious character soon becomes habitual.*

To a person moderately acquainted with human conduct, an attempt to prove this assertion would be mere trifling. All transgressions of this cast, soon become fixed, obstinate, and irreclaimable. The world teems with evidence of this humiliating position; and the whole progress of time has daily accumulated a mountainous mass of facts evincing its certainty in a more and more humiliating manner.

Of these, the most humiliating and dreadful collection is found in those baleful tenements of prostitution and profligacy which deform, so far as my information extends, every populous city on the globe, and stand publicly as the gateway to hell; opening to their miserable inhabitants a broad and beaten road to perdition. Into these deplorable mansions, the polluted female, cast off by mankind as an outlaw from human society, shorn even from the side of natural affection and parental mercy, betrayed by the villany of a second Judas, and hurried by shame, remorse, and anguish, enters never to escape. Here, from the first moment, she closes her eyes upon friends, kindness, and compassion; takes her final farewell of earthly comfort; and sees, with a dying eye, the last glimmerings of hope go out in eternal night. Here she bids an everlasting adieu to the sabbath, the house, and the word of God. To her the calls of mercy are made no more. To her the voice of the Redeemer sounds no more. The spirit of truth cannot be supposed to enter the haunts of sin and *death*; nor to shed the dew of life upon these voluntary victims of corruption by whom they are inhabited. Immortal life here becomes extinct. Hither the "*hope*" of heaven "*never comes, that comes to all:*" and the wretched throng, embosomed by these baleful walls, enter upon their perdition on this side of the grave.

Who, that is not lost to candour, and buried in misanthropy, could believe, unless he were forced to believe,

that princes and other rulers of mankind, have taxed and licensed these houses of ruin; and that in countries where the gospel beams, and the voice of salvation is heard in the streets! Who could believe, that sin would be thus bartered in the market, and damnation be holden up as a commodity for bargain and sale; that the destruction of the human soul would be publicly announced, granted, and authorized as a privilege; and that patents would be made out, signed, and sealed, for populating more extensively the world of woe.

In the mean time, it is ever to be remembered, that the betrayer accompanies to the same dreadful end the victim of his treachery. *None who go into* these outer chambers of perdition *turn again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.*

5. *This conduct destroys all moral principle.* "However it be accounted for (says Dr. Paley), the criminal commerce of the sexes corrupts and depraves the mind and moral character more than any single species of vice whatsoever. That ready perception of guilt, that prompt and decisive resolution against it, which constitutes a virtuous character, is seldom found in persons addicted to these indulgences. They prepare an easy admission for every sin that seeks it; are in low life, usually the first stage in men's progress to the most desperate villanies; and in high life, to that lamented dissoluteness of principle which manifests itself in a profligacy of public conduct, and a contempt of the obligations of religion and moral probity."

What is here asserted by this very able writer, forced itself upon my mind many years before I saw the work containing these observations, as a strong and prominent feature in the character of man. These very declarations I have long since seen amply verified in living examples. This progress towards abandonment cannot be very easily described, much less thoroughly explained, except in a detailed account of the subject. Such an account cannot here be given. Yet the following observations will, if I mistake not, contribute to illustrate the point in question.

Almost all persons, perhaps all, derive, from early instruction and habituation, a greater or less degree of con-

scientiousness, a reverence for God, a sense of accountableness, a fixed expectation of future rewards and punishments, a veneration for truth and justice, and an established conviction of the excellence of kindness. These united, constitute that temperament of mind, on which evangelical virtue is usually as well as happily grafted; and to exterminate them, is to destroy what is here meant by all moral principle.

Persons who commit the crimes which form the principal subject of this discourse, always commit them in secret. After they are committed, the same secrecy is indispensable to the safety of the perpetrators. There must be however, there are unavoidably, some persons who at times, and in one manner and another, become acquainted with the wickedness. These must be engaged at all events to conceal what they know. To effectuate this purpose, the perpetrators are often driven to employ the grossest corruption, and the basest and most profligate measures. Agents also are often absolutely necessary to the successful accomplishment of the crimes themselves. None but abandoned men can become such agents; and none but abandoned measures can be employed with respect to their agency. As the principal criminal makes progress in this iniquity; such persons become more and more necessary to him, and familiar with him; and as during his progress he renders himself an object of detestation to all decent society; these profligates soon become his only companions, and these measures his only conduct. He who devotes himself to such companions, and such conduct, will always debase and corrupt his own mind faster than he is aware; and, with an unexpected rapidity in guilt, will very soon become a mere profligate.

Nor will he be less rapidly corrupted by the innumerable vile expedients, base fetches, treacherous plans, abominable briberies, and foul perjuries, to which he resorts for the successful perpetration of his villanous designs. To all these must be added, the putrefactive influence of impurity itself; which, as the pestilence through the body, diffuses mortification and rottenness throughout the soul; and converts it into a mere mass of death and corruption.

Conformably to these observations we see, in the ordi-

nary course of things, that impurity manures and waters every other growth of sin. Wherever it prevails, all crimes become gross, rank, and premature. Impiety, blasphemy, treachery, drunkenness, perjury, and murder, flourish around it. How justly then, as well as how solemnly, did the divine writer declare concerning the strange woman, *Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death!*

6. *Whenever this conduct assumes the flagrant character of adultery, it involves a numerous and dreadful train of additional evils.*

*It involves the most open and gross violation of the marriage-covenant;* and exposes the guilty person therefore to the peculiar wrath of that tremendous Being, invoked as a witness of it; and incomprehensibly, as well as most impudently, affronted by the violation.

*It accomplishes the greatest injury which the innocent party to that covenant can receive on this side of the grave.* This injury is formed of a vast combination of sufferings, reaching every important interest in this world always; and often in the world to come; exquisitely keen and poignant, piercing the very seat of thought, and sense, and feeling, and awakening in long succession throes of agony and despair. The husband, for example, is forced to behold his wife, once and alway beloved beyond expression, not less affectionate than beloved, and hitherto untarnished even with suspicion, corrupted by fraud, circumvention, and villany; seduced from truth, virtue, and hope; and voluntarily consigned to irretrievable ruin. His prospects of enjoyment, and even of comfort, in the present world, are overcast with the blackness of darkness. Life to him is changed into a lingering death. His house is turned into an empty dreary cavern. Himself is widowed. His children are orphans; not by the righteous providence of God, but by the murderous villany of man. Clouded with woe, and hung round with despair, his soul becomes a charnel-house, where life, and peace, and comfort, have expired; a tomb, dark and hollow, covering the remains of departed enjoyment, and opening no more to the entrance of the living.

It involves injuries to the children which numbers can-

not calculate, and which the tongue cannot describe. The hand of villany has robbed them of all their peculiar blessings; the blessings of maternal care and tenderness; the rich blessings of maternal instruction and government; the delightful and most persuasive blessings of maternal example; the exalted privilege of united parental prayers; and the exquisite enjoyments of a peaceful, harmonious, and happy fireside; once exquisitely happy, but now to be happy no more.

To this most affecting and pitiable train of mourners, a numerous and additional train of friends unite themselves to deplore the common woe. A singular, an agonizing procession is formed at the funeral of departed virtue. Tears stream which no hand can wipe away. Groans ascend, which no comforter can charm to peace. Bosoms heave with anguish, which all the balm of Gilead cannot soothe. The object of lamentation is gone for ever; and all that remains is a mass of living death, soon to be buried in the eternal grave.

7. *This wickedness, when it becomes extensive, overspreads a country with final ruin.*

It is the nature of this evil, not only to become greater and greater in individuals, but to extend continually also to greater and greater numbers of individuals. The corruption of *Sodom and the* neighbouring *cities of the plain,* was rapid and complete. Within a short period after they were built, ten righteous persons could not be found in them all. What was true of these cities, is true of others in similar circumstances. To the Israelites, before they entered into Canaan, God prescribed a long series of laws, requiring absolute purity of conduct; prohibiting, in the most solemn manner, lewdness of every kind; and enacting against it the most dreadful penalties. *Do not,* said JEHOVAH, *prostitute thy daughter; lest the land become full of wickedness. Ye shall not commit any of these abominations, that the land spue not you out also when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you.* In the sight of God therefore, this sin is peculiarly the source of corruption to a land; a source whence *it becomes full of wickedness;* and vomits out its inhabitants, as being unable to bear them. Those who practise it, and the nation in which

the practice prevails, are, he declares, abhorred by him, and shall be finally destroyed. *For whosoever*, saith he, *shall commit any of these abominations, that soul shall be cut off from his people.*

As crimes of this nature become less and less unfrequent, they become less and less scandalous; and by all who are inclined to perpetrate them, are esteemed less and less sinful. Of course, they are regarded with decreasing reluctance and horror. The father practises them; and with his example corrupts his son. The husband in the same manner corrupts his wife; the brother his brother; the friend his friend; and the neighbour his neighbour. Soon the brothel raises its polluted walls; and becomes a seminary of Satan, where crimes are provided, taught, perpetrated, multiplied without number, and beyond degree; and to a great extent concealed from the public eye. To one of these caverns of darkness and death, another succeeds, and another; until the city, and ultimately the whole land, becomes one vast Sodom Lost to every thought of reformation, and to every feeling of conscience; *an astonishment and a hissing to mankind;* a reprobate of heaven; it invokes upon the heads of its putrid inhabitants a new tempest of fire and brimstone. Morals, life, and hope, to such a community, have expired. They breathe indeed, and move, and act; and to the careless eye appear as living beings. But the life is merely a counterfeit. They are only a host of moving corpses; an assembly of the dead, destined to no future resurrection. Disturbed and restless spectres, they haunt the surface of the earth in material forms, filling the sober and contemplative mind with alarm and horror; until they finally disappear, and hurry through the gloomy mansions of the grave to everlasting woe.

# SERMON CXXI.

## SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

### POLYGAMY. DIVORCE.

*The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female; and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away, doth commit adultery. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.*—MATT. XIX. 3—11.

THE next violation of the seventh command, which I shall think it necessary to examine at large in this system, is *divorce.*

Were I delivering a formal course of ethical lectures, I should feel myself obliged to extend the same examination to *polygamy.* As a practical subject in this country, it demands indeed little consideration. But from its inherent importance, and its extensive prevalence in the world;

and still more from the fact, that it has been either partially or wholly defended by some grave men; it deserves to become a subject of serious consideration. Thinking men ought on such a subject to have their opinions settled. For these reasons, although I cannot expatiate, I feel myself bound to make a few observations upon it in a summary manner.

*Polygamy is unlawful, because God, in the original institution of marriage, confines it to the union of one man with one woman. For this cause,* said *he, who created them male and female, shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh. Whom God therefore hath joined together, let no man put asunder.* God hath joined *two.* This is the only authority under which marriage lawfully exists. Polygamy is therefore a violation of the institution of God.

*Polygamy appears to be* directly *forbidden in the Mosaic law.* Lev. xviii. 18. *Thou shalt not take a wife to her sister to vex her in her lifetime:* or, as it is in the margin, *Thou shalt not take one wife to another.* The words, a wife to her sister, Dr. Edwards observes, are found in the Hebrew, if I remember right, eight times. In every other passage except that just quoted, they refer to inanimate objects: such as *the wings of the cherubim, tenons, mortices,* &c. They seem to denote principally, the exact likeness of one thing to another; and here forbid, as the margin expresses it, *the taking of one wife to another in her lifetime.*

*Polygamy is forbidden in the prophecy of Malachi. The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed.* Mal. ii. 14, 15.

The prophet in this passage, although speaking of all the wives in the nation of Israel, *yet mentions the word in the singular number only.* Of the union of one husband with one wife he declares God to have been witness; and thus plainly indicates, that this union lawfully extended to no more. In the second verse quoted, he asks, *Did he not make one?* That is, *one wife,* when *he had the residue of the*

*Spirit*, and could with the same ease have created many, if he had pleased. *And wherefore one?* To this question he answers, *that he might seek a godly seed.* In other words, he created one man and one woman, and united them, and them only, in the marriage-institution; because one husband and one wife, thus united, would, by religious education and example, promote piety in their offspring. This is an implicit but clear and decisive declaration, that in a state of polygamy pious children would very rarely be be found. Polygamy therefore cannot be lawful; as being hostile to the design of God in this institution, and to the highest interest of mankind.

*Polygamy is expressly forbidden in the text.* Here the man who puts away his wife and marries another, is declared to commit adultery. In what does this adultery consist? Certainly not in putting away the former wife. A man may obviously leave his wife, or a woman her husband, and yet neither of them be at all guilty of this sin. *The adultery* then *consists in the fact, that the man marries a second wife while the first is living.* But this is always done in polygamy. Polygamy is therefore a continued state of adultery.

*There is not a passage in the Scriptures, in which the institution of marriage, or the relation which it creates, is spoken of in the form, either of doctrine or precept, which gives even a remote hint of the lawful union of more than two persons.* Husband and wife are the terms invariably used in every case of this nature.

*A bishop and a deacon, in an age when polygamy was common, are expressly required each to be a husband to one wife.* Yet *marriage is declared* to be *honourable in all.* If polygamy then were at all the marriage spoken of, or the scriptural marriage; it would be honourable, and therefore becoming and proper, in bishops and deacons; and no reason appears for this restriction on them, any more than on other men.

*The only instance of polygamy recorded in the Scriptures, during the first two thousand years after the institution of marriage, was that of Lamech; and this appears to have been considered by himself and those around him as sinful.* Noah and his three sons had but one wife each.

*All the instances of polygamy, of which the history is given in the Scriptures to any extent, were sources of many and bitter calamities, both to the parents and children.*

Equally hostile to this practice is *the state of facts.*

*The numbers of the sexes, born and living to adult years, in all nations and ages, have been so nearly equal, as to indicate plainly the will of the Author of our being, that one man and one woman only were to be united as parties in marriage.* This equality is indeed denied by Mr. Bruce, with respect to Syria and Arabia; and with no small appearance of being founded on evidence. But when I remember, that it is a contradiction to the law of our nature in all ages, and in all other places; that the fact is mentioned by no ancient or modern historian; that Mr. Bruce, so far as my information extends, is the only traveller who has mentioned it; particularly that it escaped the observations of Shaw, Russel, Maundrel, and especially Nieburh; I cannot help believing, that this respectable writer was misled in his apprehensions. It ought to be added, that the knowledge in question must, if attained at all, be, from the existing state of society in those countries, attained with extreme difficulty, and accompanied with not a little uncertainty. This story is also expressly contradicted by lord Valentia, who has lately travelled in Arabia.

*Polygany is unfriendly to population.*

When the world was to be replenished, under an immediate command of God, with human beings; a single pair was chosen to be the means of accomplishing this design.

When the same design was, under the same command, to be accomplished anew; God chose the three sons of Noah, and their three wives, as the proper means of fulfilling it.

The Turks are polygamists. They possess all the power, almost all the wealth, and therefore almost all the means of subsistence, found in the empire. Yet they are few in number, compared with the Greeks; who marry but one wife, and who, subjected to iron bondage under the despotism of these hard masters, are continually impoverished, and plundered of a precarious subsistence, by their rapacious hands.

*Polygamy degrades from their proper rank, privileges, and*

*enjoyments, to an almost animal level, one half of the human race.* This enormous injustice no consideration can excuse or palliate.

*Polygamy has regularly introduced domestic broils of the most bitter kind, terminating in the most fatal manner, and involving, in their deplorable consequences, both the parents and the children.* Of this truth complete proofs are found in the few historical accounts which have reached us of the Turkish and Persian royal families.

These considerations, if I mistake not, amply prove, that *polygamy is unlawful, and a direct violation of the seventh command.*

I shall now proceed to consider the proper subject of the text. This I shall introduce under the following general observation, as directly expressing the principal doctrine in the text;

*That divorces for any other cause except incontinence are unlawful.*

This important scriptural truth I shall endeavour to support by arguments derived both from *Scripture* and *reason.*

*From the Scriptures,* I allege,

1. *That marriage is a divine institution; and is therefore unalterable by man.*

That marriage is a divine institution has, I apprehend, been made abundantly evident from various parts of this passage examined in the discourse on the origin of marriage. It was there proved, if I mistake not, that God has really joined together every lawfully married pair among the children of Adam. That *what God hath* thus *joined* by his infinite authority *man cannot* lawfully *put asunder,* needs no illustration. God has made the *twain one.* Man cannot make them twain again, unless with the evident permission of God.

It is to be observed here, that *the translation* exactly expresses the meaning of *the original* in this part of the text: *let not man put asunder.* The Greek word is ανθρωπος, without the article: the most absolute and unlimited expression in that language to denote *man universally, without any respect to age, sex, or condition.* The prohibition

therefore is not, *that the husband,* as among the Jews, Greeks, and others; nor that *a judicial tribunal,* as among ourselves; nor that *a legislature,* as in some other communities; may not sunder this union; but that *man, in no condition, place, or time; man, possessed of no authority whatever; may sunder this union,* without an express permission from God.

2. *I allege, as a decisive argument, the guilt which is directly charged by Christ upon all the parties in the divorce, and the consequent marriages.*

In the text Christ declares, that the man who divorces his wife, and marries another, and the man who marries the divorced wife, are both guilty of adultery in this transaction. The same crime in Matt. v. 32 is charged upon the divorced woman. It will not be questioned, that the woman who marries the divorced husband is guilty in exactly the same manner. Neither of these marriages therefore can possibly take place, without involving the crime of adultery in both the married parties. Consequently, a divorce, except for incontinence, is here for ever barred. A divorce professedly sets the parties free, so that they may lawfully marry again. But it is plain from these observations, that they cannot be thus set free, and can never lawfully marry again. Whatever husbands, judges, or legislators, may think, or declare, or do; all these parties will, by their subsequent marriages, become guilty of adultery. Thus Christ has pronounced; and thus he certainly will pronounce at the final day.

It is here remarked, that this decision of Christ was totally contrary to the views entertained by his apostles. This they directly declare in the following words; *If the cause of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.* Christ however does not qualify nor soften the decision at all. On the contrary, he leaves it exactly where he had left it before. *All men,* he replies, *cannot receive this saying; save they to whom it is given:* and again; *He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.*

3. *St. Paul has determined the same point anew; and in the most explicit manner conceivable.*

*Unto the married I command; yet not I, but the Lord: let not the wife depart:* χωρισθηναι, be separated; that is, by a

divorce; voluntarily accomplished by herself; *from her husband;* this being the only command which could be addressed to the wife with any meaning. *But and if she depart;* Εαν δε και χωρισθη; *But even if she be separated;* that is, by means of a divorce accomplished by him; *let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife;* και ανδρα γυναικα μη αφιεναι, *and I also command the husband not to put away his wife.* This also is a part of the command given by Christ in the text; and is quoted, not as I apprehend from the text itself, which it is very possible St. Paul at this time may not have seen; but from that immediate revelation which this apostle received of the gospel from the mouth of Christ.

We have here the decision of Christ concerning this subject recited, and declared to be *his* decision by St. Paul; and therefore know the manner in which this command of our Saviour was understood by an inspired commentator. The same precept is here given in all its latitude. A divorce on both sides is absolutely prohibited: and in case of a divorce, the injured party, the person divorced, is forbidden expressly and absolutely to marry again.

The apostle then goes on, *but to the rest:* that is, to those whose cases were not contemplated by the command of Christ, because they had not existed when that command was given; *but to the rest I command, not the Lord. If any brother* that is a Christian *hath a wife who is an infidel, and she be well pleased to dwell with him; let him not put her away: and if any woman,* that is, any Christian woman, *hath a husband who is an infidel, and he be well pleased to dwell with her; let her not put him away.*

The case here mentioned by the apostle was a new one. While Christ was on earth, there were no Christians who had infidel, that is Heathen, husbands or wives. For the peculiar circumstances of persons thus situated, Christ had therefore made no direct explicit provision. Doubts concerning the proper conduct of such persons, with regard to the duties of the married state, appear evidently to have arisen in the church of Corinth. The great evil felt by these Christians, concerning which they clearly appear to me to have written to St. Paul for his directions, seems to have con-

sisted in *these two things: the difficulties to which they were subjected by their infidel husbands and wives, with respect to their attendance on the ordinances of the gospel; and their fears, lest their children, having one infidel parent, should, on account of this fact, be excluded from the Christian church, and denied the ordinance of baptism.* The latter of these evils the apostle removes, together with the apprehensions of it, in the following verse. *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife; and the unbelieving wife by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.* That is, the unbelieving party in the marriage-state is, by means of this connexion with the believing party, sanctified in such a sense, that the children are not put out of the covenant, but may be offered up to God in baptism.

The former of these difficulties the apostle obviates in the verse next succeeding. *But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart.* Ει δε απιστος χωριζεται, χωριζεσθω. If the infidel separate himself, let him separate himself. *A brother or a sister is not in bondage in such things. But God hath called us to peace.* The apostle, it is to be remembered, had no control over the Heathen. He says therefore, *If the infidel separate himself, let him separate himself.* This is a case over which I have no control, in which you can obtain no relief, and to which you are therefore bound to submit with patience and resignation. But a brother or sister is under no obligation to follow the infidel party; whatever may be thought concerning the extent of the marriage-vow; nor to forsake the worship of God or its ordinances; nor to consent that his or her children should be withdrawn from the privileges of religion. Such a case involves the deepest bondage; and to this bondage no Christian brother or sister is subjected. The verb, here rendered *is in bondage*, is δεδουλωται; literally rendered, *hath been reduced to the deepest servitude.* The servitude intended by the apostle is, in my apprehension, unquestionably, *the submission of a Christian to an infidel husband or wife, so hostile to the Christian religion, as to refuse to continue in the marriage-relation, and perform the duties involved in it, unless the Christian partner will consent to give up the privileges of the gospel.* This would indeed be a deplorable bondage; and

deserving of being expressed by the strong term which St. Paul has selected.

Several very respectable commentators, and among them Poole, Doddridge, and Macknight, have, I am aware, supposed this bondage to consist in the obligation under which the Christian party might be imagined to lie, to continue still unmarried. I acknowledge myself surprised at this explanation, and at the reasons by which it is professedly supported. Dr. Macknight, after alleging that this is the apostle's meaning, declares that his decision is just; *because there is no reason why the innocent party, through the fault of the guilty party, should be exposed to the danger of committing adultery.*

Poole says, "*Such a person hath broken the bond of marriage; and Christians are not under bondage, by the laws of God, to keep themselves unmarried, on account of the perverseness of such parties to the marriage-covenant.*"

To this opinion and these reasons I answer, that *Christ has expressly forbidden the divorced wife, however innocent, to marry again; and has declared, that if she does marry, she will be an adulteress.* Certainly, the *divorced wife* may be, and often is, as innocent as the *deserted wife;* and in the nature of the case is as probably innocent. With equal justice then may it be said in this case, as in the case of the deserted wife, that there is no reason why the innocent party, through *the fault of the guilty party, should be exposed to commit adultery.*

Again. *The divorced wife is more injured than the deserted wife.* She is not only deprived of all the privileges and blessings lost by the deserted wife, but of many more. She is forced by violence from her husband, her children, and her home. She is turned out with disgrace; as a woman with whom her husband could not continue to live; and usually with little provision made for her subsistence. The wife who is deserted is, on the contrary, almost always left in the possession of her house, her children, her character, and tolerable means of subsistence for herself and her family. She may be, and most usually is, deserted for reasons involving no disgrace to her. Her husband may have contracted an unwarrantable attachment for another object; indulged a spirit of roving and adventure; dis-

graced himself by his previous conduct; or fled from some exposure to punishment for some crime, or from creditors whom he cannot or will not pay. Accordingly, deserted wives are probably as generally persons of good reputation, as others of their sex. On all these accounts, the case of the divorced wife is incomparably harder than that of the deserted wife. Can it be possible, that Christ has rescued the deserted wife from this deepest bondage, as these writers understand it, and have left the divorced wife amid so many more and severer hardships, yet equally innocent, to suffer the whole extent of this thraldom?

Mr. Poole says, the deserter hath broken the bond of marriage, and thus released the deserted party from the laws of God concerning it, so far as they require abstinence from marriage.

I answer; the divorcer has broken this bond still more violently, and made the infraction more complete. Of course he has, according to this scheme, in a higher degree made it lawful for the divorced wife to marry again. This reasoning therefore, equally with that of Dr. Macknight, makes the decision of Christ both unwise and unjust.

Besides, this scheme renders the precept concerning divorce entirely fruitless. The man who wishes to divorce his wife, is by this scheme entirely released from all the trouble and expense, and generally also from the scandal, usually attendant upon this iniquitous proceeding. He cannot indeed free himself from the sin of deserting his wife, and all those sins which are involved in it. But he may give his wife the opportunity of marrying innocently another husband. When this is done, he himself may, for aught that appears, marry innocently another wife. Thus, by undergoing an absence of three years, the time *here* limited for this object, he may, without any peculiar scandal, and without the sin of adultery, accomplish the very object aimed at in cases of this nature by licentious men: *viz.* a second marriage.

St. Paul, in the mean time, has in this very chapter determined the point in question against these commentators. *Unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord; let not the wife be separated from her husband. But, even if she be separated, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled*

*to her husband.* The word, here translated *separated,* is the same which is used in the 15th verse; the subject of this inquiry. Is it credible, that an inspired man should at all, or that any man of sober sense should, within the compass of five sentences, give two contradictory precepts concerning any subject; especially a subject of this importance? Peculiarly it is incredible, that St. Paul, immediately after reciting a solemn command of Christ, and declaring it to be *his,* should subjoin a contradictory command.

To me it appears equally incredible, that an apostle should designate the situation in which Christ had placed an innocently divorced woman, innocently I mean on her part, by the word δεδουλωται; and thus style it *the deepest bondage.* It is, I think, impossible, that the Spirit of God should call any state, produced by obedience to the commands of Christ, by the name of *bondage;* and still more evidently impossible, that he should denote it by a name expressing *the most suffering and disgraceful bondage.* How can such an appellation consist with that phraseology, in which *the whole situation of Christians* is by the same Spirit styled *the glorious liberty of the sons of God?* If the deserted wife is brought under this bondage, by being denied the liberty of marrying again; the divorced wife is, by the same denial, brought under this bondage in a still more distressing degree. Yet to this situation she is reduced by the express command of Christ.

Finally. St. Paul himself has clearly shewn, that this was not his meaning, by the words immediately following the passage in question. *But God hath called us to peace. For how knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?* Surely the second marriage contended for cannot ordinarily be the means of *the peace* here mentioned: that is, peace or concord between the divorced pair. Much more is it improbable, that a husband or a wife should, *by means of second marriages,* become instruments of salvation to each other. This desirable event may be fairly hoped for, if they continue unmarried, from their reconciliation to each other; but cannot be even remotely hoped for from their divorce, and their consequent final separation.

Should it be said, that *the case of the deserted wife is a hard one:* I acknowledge it. The sins both of ourselves and others create none but hard cases. That of the divorced wife is still harder. The reason why this law is established, is undoubtedly found in *the immense importance of the marriage-institution.* It is incomparably better that individuals should suffer, than that an institution, which is the basis of all human good, should be shaken or endangered.

I have dwelt thus minutely on this abused passage, because it is the strong hold of those with whom I am contending. If they cannot find support for their opinions *here,* they can find it no where. That they cannot find it here has, I trust, been shewn beyond a reasonable doubt.

What the Scriptures teach us concerning the subject of divorce, *is abundantly established by reason.* This I shall attempt to evince in the following observations.

It is acknowledged by the advocates for this system, that *the Scriptures do indeed forbid a divorce for any other reason beside incontinence, or something equivalent.* The things which they consider as equivalent are, *obstinate desertion, gross personal abuse, incompatibility of temper, confirmed madness,* &c. I do not intend, that they are all agreed with respect to this class of things: but that some or other of these they actually propose as reasons for divorce equivalent to incontinence.

Concerning this subject I observe,

1. *That there is no such thing as an equivalent in this case.*

No crime, no injury, affects the happiness of wedlock, or wounds so deeply every domestic interest. None so entirely terminates every enjoyment and every hope, as the crime mentioned by our Saviour. As this is sufficiently evident from the preceding discourse, itwould be useless to spend time in considering it any farther. I shall only observe therefore, that incontinence not only destroys connubial happiness and hopes; but annihilates, so far as it extends, the very institution from which they spring.

2. *What is at least equally important, the Scriptures have no where mentioned any thing as an equivalent.*

It must, I think, be admitted without a question, that, if the divine lawgiver had intended that any thing should be

considered, in the case in hand, as an equivalent to incontinence, he certainly would have expressly mentioned it. Certainly he must at least be supposed to have hinted it, or alluded to it in some manner or other. But this he has not done. Unanswerably then it was no part of his intentions. It cannot therefore be assumed as such by us. We are here, as well as in other cases, bound absolutely to see, that we *add not to his words, lest he reprove us, and we be found liars.* I know of no pretence, that there is any thing of this nature found in the Scriptures, except the desertion mentioned in the passage which has been so long the theme of discussion: and this, it is believed, has been clearly shewn to have not even the remotest reference to the subject now under consideration. But,

3. *It is urged, that the evils, involved in the things here mentioned as equivalents, are intolerable; and demand relief from human jurisprudence.*

To this I answer,

In the first place, *That although these evils were much greater than they are in fact, and I acknowledge them to be very great; yet, if God has not thought proper to allow us, and still more if he has forbidden us, to escape from them in the manner proposed, they must be alleged in vain as arguments for divorce.*

The government of his creatures belongs only to God: and nothing but impiety can induce us to interfere with either the modes or principles of his administration. If he has permitted divorce on either of these grounds, it is lawful. If he has not, however numerous or great may be the evils which we suffer, they will not contribute at all towards rendering it lawful.

Secondly. *All these evils may be relieved more perfectly than by divorce; and as perfectly as human governments can relieve them, by the separation a mensa et thoro.*

In this process, the parties, though not released from the bonds of marriage, are separated from each other so far, that the innocent party is no longer bound to live with the guilty. The common property is so disposed of also, as to furnish provision for the wants of both. The children, at the same time, are distributed by public justice in the best manner which the case will admit. Here, all the means

are furnished which can be furnished, for the relief and future safety of the aggrieved party; and incomparably better means than any which divorce can offer.

Thirdly. *Divorce, instead of remedying, enhances these evils beyond comprehension.*

*A law permitting divorces, except where personal worth and wisdom prevent, produces an immediate separation of interests among all the married persons in a community.* With a complete conviction of their liability to divorce for the causes alleged, every married pair begin their connexion. For this event then common prudence requires them to make such provision as may be in their power. The wife, the feebler and more dependant party, strongly realizing, from the beginning, her danger of being left to precarious means of subsistence, at a time always uncertain, and therefore always felt to be near, will be driven, by common prudence and powerful necessity, to lay up something in store against the evil day. The husband, aware of this state of things from the beginning, will be irresistibly led to oppose it in every part of its progress. This he will do by placing his property, so far as it may be in his power, beyond the reach of his wife; and by contending strenuously for the preservation of the remainder.

*A separation of interests is, in all intelligent beings, necessarily a separation of affections.* Heaven itself would cease to be a world of love, were its inhabitants no longer to feel a common interest. Oneness of interests makes their oneness of mind, life, and labours. Separate the interests of a married pair, and you separate at once all their affections. Shew them the probability, or even the possibility, of a future divorce; and you shew them its certainty. From this moment a separation of interests is begun. From this period, however affectionate they may originally have been, their affection will cease. The consciousness that their interests are opposed, will immediately beget coldness, alienation, jealousy, and, in the end, rivetted hatred.

Between persons living together, causes of dispute can never fail frequently to arise. Among persons, whose interests generally harmonize, and who are governed by principle and moderation, such causes produce little effect. But between persons in the situation which I have de-

scribed, they never fail to operate with their fullest efficacy. Their minds are ready to take fire on every occasion, and to construe, in the worst manner, every real or supposed provocation; every seeming neglect; every slight word; every unpleasant look. They are dissatisfied with almost every thing that is done, or left undone. A spark will kindle such combustible materials into a flame.

Among persons thus circumstanced, dispositions naturally kind soon become unkind; tempers, before sufficiently compatible, soon become utterly incompatible. Where offices of kindness would have naturally multiplied and flourished, jars are multiplied; bitterness flourishes; disputes are generated; personal violence follows; and not unnaturally murder itself. Thus the very evils which divorce professes to relieve, it only creates; and creates them in millions of instances where it designs to relieve them in one. Thus plain is it, to use the language of Dryden, that,

"God never made his work for man to mend."

*Were a divorce impossible, the interests of every married pair would be one through life.* This fact would so far unite their affections, as to prevent a great part of the debates of which I have been speaking; and in most cases to terminate the rest without any serious difficulty. Persons who know that their contentions are hopeless, and that, however desirable their separation might seem, it is impossible to effect it, will almost always so far make the best of their circumstances, as to sit down in a tolerable state of content. The absolute union of their interests cannot fail to recur unceasingly to their minds; nor to operate on them with powerful efficacy. Their affection, though occasionally intermitted, will return with its former strength. The necessity which each feels of the other's good offices will daily be realized. The superior happiness of former harmony will be remembered. Their children also, for whom their cares have been so often kindly mingled, will plead in the most interesting manner for the continuance of their mutual good-will. Thus life, although not without its alternations of disquiet, will in the main go on pleasantly, where, in millions of instances, the knowledge

that divorce was attainable would have produced discord, hatred, separation, and ruin.

It is well known to every observer of human nature, that a prominent part of this nature is *the love of novelty and variety in all its pursuits.* In no case is this propensity more predominant than in the case in hand. Polygamists have endeavoured to satisfy this propensity by replenishing their harams with a multitude of wives. Profligates have attempted to compass the same object by a promiscuous concubinage. The endeavours of both however have been equally fruitless. David, by this disposition, was seduced to adultery. Solomon, in the multiplication of wives and concubines, has shewn that it knows no limits; and that its effects are nothing but corruption and ruin. By divorce, this disposition is let loose; and the spirit of licentiousness has the sign given to roam and ravage without control. The family, which all the causes of wretchedness already mentioned would not have made unhappy, will be ruined by this cause: a cause sufficiently powerful and sufficiently malignant to ruin a world.

*To the children, such a state of things is a regular source of absolute destruction.* During the contentions of the parents, which will usually be generated by the mere attainableness of a divorce, and which become ultimately the occasion of granting it, *the children will either be forgotten, or forced to take sides with the parents.* In both cases, their whole education to useful purposes will be neglected. Particularly, they will never be *trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* Jarring parents; and there will be millions of such parents wherever divorce prevails to one where it does not; can never teach their children religion, either by precept or example. Amid their own irreligious contentions, the farce would be too gross for impudence itself to act, and too ridiculous to be received seriously even by children. They would be left therefore to grow up Atheists, or Nihilists, without religion, without a God, without a hope.

*In the former case,* all their other interests; their support, their comfort, their preparation for business, and their hopes of future usefulness, reputation, and enjoyment; would be neglected. Parents, whose minds were in a con-

tinual state of irritation and hostility, could never unite in any thing of this nature: and nothing of this nature, in which they did not unite, would ever be done to any purpose.

*In the latter case,* the children would be taught to join one parent in contending against the other. Here they would be taught, *some to dishonour their father,* and *some to dishonour their mother;* in direct opposition to the moral law; and taught by those whom God had appointed to teach them this law. Filial impiety is the most unnatural and monstrous wickedness of which children are ordinarily guilty. We cannot wonder therefore, that it should conduct them to every other wickedness; that it should end in impiety to God, or injustice to mankind. The children here are directly taught by one parent to hate and despise the other. Their contentions and calumnies, their mutual scorn and hatred, will force the children to despise both. Children who regard their parents with habitual disrepect, will soon respect neither man nor God. Devoid of principle, destitute of every good habit, trained up to insubordination and rebellion, and witnesses from their infancy of discord only, malignity, abuse, and slander; they are prepared to be mere villains, nuisances, and pests, in the world.

I have all along supposed the parents to continue together, until the children have grown up to some degree of maturity and reflection. This however would by no means be the common case; and would exist less and less frequently as divorces multiplied. The consequences of an earlier separation, such as would generally take place, would be still more dreadful. *Such of the children as followed the mother,* however affectionate might be her disposition, would share in all the calamities necessarily springing from her unprotected, suffering condition. Women are constitutionally unfitted to encounter the rude, toilsome, and discouraging scenes, every where presented by this unkind, untoward world, and allotted by the Creator only to the robust hardihood of man. A divorced female is almost necessarily an outcast. Her children, who follow her fortunes, must be outcasts also. Defenceless herself, she cannot defend *them.* Unable to support herself, she will be still more unable to support *them.* Even the spirit of mo-

deration will regard her as unworthy and disgraced. The common feelings of the world will mark her as the mere butt of scorn and infamy. Why was she divorced? "Because she was unfit to sustain the character of a wife," will be the answer every where hissed out by the tongue of contempt. In all this contempt, and in all the evils which this wolfish spirit draws in its train, the children will necessarily share; and will be regarded like the spurious offspring of beggars, born under a hedge, and buried in a ditch.

Such of them as survived their multiplied sufferings, and these would be comparatively few, would be solitary, deserted beings; without a home; without a father; without education; without industry; without employment; without comforts; and without hopes; residing no where, and related to nobody. Like the wild men, said to be found at times in the forests of Germany and Poland, and supposed to be nursed by *bears*, they would sustain the character of mere animals. At war with every thing, and by every thing warred upon; when out of sight, forgotten; and when seen, regarded only with horror: they would live without a friend, without a name; nay, sunk beneath the cattle wandering in the same deserts, without a mark to denote to whom they belonged. Thus they would prowl through life; and putrefy on the spot where they were seized by death.

*Nor would the children who followed the father, in most instances, be at all more comfortable.* The cold-hearted cruelty of *step-mothers* is proverbial. Palpable injustice has, I doubt not, been extensively done by the unkind opinions of the public to persons of this denomination. I have myself known multitudes of persons fill this station with great integrity, tenderness, and excellence. Yet even in this enlightened, refined, and christianized country, I believe there are few mothers, who leave the world while their families are young, without very serious anxieties concerning the treatment which their children will receive from their future step-mothers. This and every thing else dreaded or complained of with respect to the class of persons in question, exists in the midst of a community made up of parents married according to the laws of God. Their

families also live in the midst of civilization, gentleness of manners, and the mild influence of religion; where the whole tide of things flows favourably to humanity, justice, kindness, and all the interests of the unprotected.

Far different would be the situation of children under this superintendence in regions where divorce prevailed. The father having released himself from one wife, and married another, would soon forsake the second for a third; this for a fourth; and this for a fifth; and thus onward, without any known limit. A French soldier lately declared, before a judicial tribunal in Paris, that he had married eleven wives in eleven years; and boasted of this fact as honourable and meritorious. The *scandal* would soon vanish; and mere convenience, whim, or passion, control the conduct. What then would become of those children of the first wife, who fell under the management of such a succession of step-mothers; absolute strangers to their family, their interests, and even their legitimacy: their mothers only for a year, a month, or a day: mothers, before whom they would only pass in review, rather than with whom they would live: mothers, distracted in their affections, if they had any; certainly in their thoughts, cares, and labours, distributed to so many children of so many sorts, having so many interests, and distracted, themselves, by so many contentions? Who does not see with a glance, that even where humanity and principle reigned, these friendless beings would soon be neglected by the step-mother in favour of her own offspring? What must be their fate, where lewdness had succeeded to principle, and humanity had already been frozen out of the heart? Soon, very soon, must they become mere and miserable outcasts; like those who wandered away from their father's house with their divorced mother.

Divorces once authorized would soon become numerous, and in most countries would, in a moderate period of time, control the whole state of society. Even in *this state*, where the tide of manners and of morals is entirely against them, and where, for somewhat more than a century, they have blackened the public character with a strange and solitary but dreadful spot, they were indeed for a long time rare. The deformity of the object was so great, the prevalence of vital religion was so general, and the power of conscience

and of public opinion so efficacious, that few, very few comparatively, had sufficient hardihood to apply. The law also allowed of less latitude to applications. At the present time, the progress of this evil is alarming and terrible. In this town,* within five years, more than fifty divorces have been granted: at an average calculation, more than four hundred in the whole state during this period; that is, one out of every hundred married pairs. What a flaming proof is here of the baleful influence of this corruption on a people, otherwise remarkably distinguished for their intelligence, morals, and religion! Happily, a strenuous opposition is begun to this antiscriptural law, which, it may be fairly hoped, will soon terminate in its final revocation.

In France, within three months after the law permitting divorces was enacted by the national assembly, there were in the city of Paris almost as many divorces registered as marriages. In the whole kingdom there were, as reported by the abbe Gregoire, chairman of a committee of the national assembly on that subject, upwards of twenty thousand divorces registered within about a year and a half. "This law," added the abbe, "will soon ruin the whole nation."

From these facts, as well as from the nature of the case, it is clearly evident, that the progress of divorce, though different in different countries, will in all be dreadful beyond conception. Within a moderate period, the whole community will be thrown, by laws made in open opposition to the laws of God, into a general prostitution. No difference exists between this prostitution and that which customarily bears the name, except that the one is licensed, the other is unlicensed, by man. To the eye of God, those who are polluted in each of these modes, are alike and equally impure, loathsome, and abandoned wretches; the offspring of Sodom and Gomorrah. They are divorced and undivorced, adulterers and adulteresses; of whom the Spirit of truth hath said, that not one of them *shall enter into the kingdom of God.* Over such a country, a virtuous man, if such a one be found, will search in vain to find a virtuous wife. Wherever he wanders, nothing will meet his eye, but still-

* New-Haven.

ing, bare-faced pollution. The realm around him has become one vast brothel; one great province of the world of perdition. To that dreadful world the only passage out of it directly leads; and all its inhabitants, thronging this broad and crooked way, hasten with one consent to that *blackness of darkness* which envelopes it for ever.

## SERMON CXXII.

### EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

### IDLENESS. PRODIGALITY.

*Thou shalt not steal.*—EXOD. XX. 15.

THE preceding command prohibits all trespasses against *purity;* this against *property.*

*To steal, is to take privately the property of others, with an intention to convert it to our own use. To rob, is to take the same property, for the same purpose, openly and with violence.* There can be little necessity of expatiating upon a crime, so well understood and so universally infamous as stealing, before an assembly whose education, principles, and habits, furnish so strong a barrier against it. It may however be useful to observe, that this crime has its origin in that spirit of covetousness, which prompts us to wish inordinately for the enjoyments and possessions of others. This spirit, when indulged continually, acquires strength; and in many instances becomes ultimately so powerful, as to break over every bound of right and reputation. The object in contemplation is seen to be desirable. As we continue to contemplate it, it becomes more and more desirable. While the attention of the mind is fixed upon it, it will be turned comparatively very little to other objects; particularly to those moral restraints which hinder us from acquiring what we thus covet. The importance and obligation of these restraints gradually fade from before the eye. The man engaged only in the business of obtaining the intended grati-

fication, naturally finds little leisure or inclination to dwell upon the danger, shame, or sin, of seizing on his neighbour's possessions. Thus he becomes unhappily prepared to put forth a bold and rash hand, and to pluck the tempting enjoyment, in spite of the awful prohibitions of his Maker. He who does not covet, will never steal. He who indulges covetousness, will find himself in danger wherever there is a temptation.

In examining this precept, it will be my principal design to consider the subject of *fraud*.

That fraud is implicitly forbidden in this precept will not, I suppose, be questioned. The catechism of the Westminster assembly of divines explains the command in this manner. "It requires," say they, "the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others;" and "forbids whatsoever doth or may unjustly hinder our own, or our neighbour's wealth or outward estate."

In the catechism of king Edward it is thus explained. "It commandeth us to beguile no man, to occupy no unlawful wares, to envy no man his wealth, and to think nothing profitable, that either is not just, or differeth from right and honesty." In this manner we are abundantly warranted to understand it by our Saviour's commentary on the other commands, in his sermon on the Mount. Accordingly, it has been generally understood in the same comprehensive manner by divines. To this interpretation the nature of the subject gives the fullest warrant. *All that which is sinful in theft, is the taking of our neighbour's property, without his knowledge or consent, and converting it to our own use.* In every fraud we do exactly the same thing, although in a different manner. Every fraud therefore, whatever be the form in which it is practised, partakes of the very same sinful nature which is found in theft.

Fraud is in all instances a violation of what is commonly called *honesty*, or *commutative justice*. *Honesty, in the scriptural sense, is a disposition to render, or the actual rendering of, an equivalent for what we receive in our dealings with others.* This equivalent may consist either of *property*, or of *services;* honesty being equally concerned with both. At the same time, there is such a thing as *defrauding one's*

*self.* "Whatsoever doth or may unjustly hinder our own outward estate," or, in other words, *that comfort and benefit which we might derive from our property, or from our opportunities of acquiring it, is of this nature; and is accordingly forbidden by this commandment.*

With these introductory observations, I shall now proceed to consider the prohibition in the text under the following heads:

I. *The fraudulent conduct which respects ourselves and our families;* and,

II. *That which respects others.*

I. *I shall mention several kinds of fraudulent conduct, which most immediately respect ourselves and our families.*

All the members of a family have a common interest; and are so intimately united in every domestic concern, that, *if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.* Whatever affects the head, must affect the whole body. If a man defraud himself, either directly or indirectly, he cannot fail therefore of defrauding his family. For this reason I have thought it proper to consider *the family* of a man as united with *himself* in this part of my subject. The 1st *specimen of fraud which I shall mention under this head, is idleness.*

That idleness hinders our own wealth or outward estate, will not be questioned. *I went by the field of the slothful,* says Solomon, *and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo! it was all grown over with thorns; and nettles had covered the face thereof; and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw and considered it well. I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.*

Idleness, at the same time, is obviously a fraud. The lazy man cheats himself of good which God hath given to him; of enjoyments put into his hands by the bounty of his Creator. These blessings he barters for the love of ease. The price which he pays is very great: that which he gets in return is *dross and dung.*

*The mischiefs of idleness* are numerous and important.

In the first place. *Idleness is a sinful waste of our time.*

Our time is a possession of inestimable value. The best employment of it, that is, such an employment of it as the Scriptures require, involves all which is meant by our duty. The loss or waste of it is therefore no other than the loss or omission of all our duty; the frustration of the purpose for which we were created.

Secondly. *Idleness is a sinful waste of our talents.*

By these I mean all the powers of body and mind; and the means which God has furnished us in his providence, of employing them for valuable ends. Our time and talents united, constitute our whole capacity of being useful; our worth; our all. The idle man wastes them both; *wraps them up in a napkin, and buries them in the earth.* In this manner he robs God of the end for which he was made, and becomes a burden upon the shoulders of his fellow-men. He eats what others provide: and, while *they* are industriously engaged in labour, *his* business is only to devour. Thus he is carried by mankind as a load, from the cradle to the grave; is despised, loathed, and execrated, while he lives; and when he dies, is buried like the carcass of an animal, to fulfil the demands of decency, and merely to get rid of a nuisance.

In the mean time his *drowsiness clothes* himself and his family *with rags;* prevents them from the enjoyments common to all around them; disappoints, without a reason perceivable by *them,* all their just expectations; and, as was formerly observed concerning the drunkenness of a parent, sinks them below the common level of mankind. Want in every form, and all the miseries of want, arrest them daily, and through life. Their food is poor and scanty: their clothes are rags: they are pinched with cold, through the destitution of fuel; and deprived of refreshing sleep, because their bed is the earth, and because their dwelling, a mere sieve, admits without obstruction snow and rain, the frost and the storm. Thus while they see almost all others around them possessed in abundance, not of the necessaries only, but of all the comforts and most of the conveniences, of life; they themselves are forced to look on, and thirst, and pine, for the tempting enjoyments; while, like

Tantalus, they are forbidden by an iron-handed necessity to taste the good.

At the same time, the man is forced to feel, while his family also are compelled by him to feel, that he, their husband and their father, is the subject of supreme folly and insignificance, and of gross, unremitted, and hopeless sin; of folly which is causeless; insignificance voluntarily assumed; sin, unnecessary and wanton: and that he is an object of general and extreme contempt. The contempt directed immediately to him, is of course extended to his family also: and they are compelled, at their first entrance into the world, to encounter the eye of scorn, and the tongue of derision. All these evils are sustained also, only that the man may lead the life of a sluggard, be assimilated to the sloth in his character, and rival the swine in his favourite mode of life, and his most coveted enjoyments.

Thirdly. *Idleness exposes a man to many temptations, and many sins.*

A lazy man is of course without any useful engagement: his mind is therefore vacant, and ready for the admission of any sin which seeks admission. To such a man temptations may be said to be always welcome. They are guests, for which he is regularly prepared: and he has neither company nor business to hinder him from yielding to them whatever attention or entertainment they may demand. The proverbial adage, that "Satan will employ him, who does not find employment for himself," is founded in experience and good sense. The mind, even of the idlest man, will be busy; and the mind which is not busy in its duty, will be busied in sin. On such a mind every temptation is secure of a powerful influence; entices without opposition, and conquers without even a struggle or a sigh. Hence we find such a man devoted, not only to the general sin of idleness, but to all the other sins which he cannot conveniently practise.

*The sluggard,* says Solomon, *is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.* From this miserable vanity, of which their deplorable mismanagement of their own affairs ought to cure them at a glance, it arises, that sluggards so commonly become *the professed counsel-*

*lors of mankind.* Hence it arises that so many of them are *politicians, pettifoggers,* and *separatical preachers.* They know nothing, it is true, except what an abecedarian knows, of either divinity, law, or government. Still they feel and declare themselves to be abundantly able to teach the way to heaven, which they have never learned; and to explain laws, which they never studied. The affairs of a nation, so numerous, so complicated, and so extensive, as to be comprehended only by minds peculiarly capacious, and to demand the laborious study of a life, these men understand instinctively; without inquiry, information, or thought. Their own affairs, it is true, they manage in such a manner, as to conduct them only to ruin. Yet they feel perfectly competent to manage the affairs of a nation with pre-eminent skill, and certain success. Every thing in the concerns of the public, if you will believe them, goes wrong; and will never be set right, if you will believe them a little farther, by any body but themselves. These men are *smoke to the eyes, and vinegar to the teeth,* of persons possessing real understanding. To the public they are mere nuisances, living on the earnings of others; fomentors of discontent; active agents in riots and broils; incendiaries, who consume the peace and comfort of all around them, and who well deserve to be *the by-word, and the hissing,* of every upright and benevolent citizen. Such were the men whom the Jews of Thessalonica gathered into a company against Paul; who *set all the city in an uproar;* and attempted to destroy the apostle and his religion by the violence of a mob. They were αγοραιοι, translated *lewd fellows of the baser sort;* literally, *idle lounging haunters of market-places.*

It ought particularly to be remembered, that *persons of this character rarely become converts to Christianity.* Among all those who within my knowledge have appeared to become sincerely penitent and reformed, I recollect only a single lazy man; and this man became industrious from the moment of his apparent and I doubt not real conversion. The sinful prostitution of his time and talents by idleness, and his ready admission of temptations to his heart, fix the idler in a regular hostility against all the promises and threatenings of religion: while his self-con-

ceit makes him too wise willingly to receive wisdom even from God. Few cases in human life are in this respect more desperate than that of the idler. A preacher destined to address an assembly of such men, might, with nearly the same hope of success, exchange his desk for the churchyard; and waste his eloquence upon the tenants of the grave.

In the mean time, every lazy man ought steadily to remember, that *his very subsistence is founded on fraud. If any man will not work,* saith the Proprietor of all things, *neither let him eat.* For him to eat is to rob; to rob his Maker of *his* property, and his fellow-men of *theirs.*

2. *Prodigality is another fraud of the same general nature.*

There are various modes of prodigality. Property may be wasted by negligence; by foolish bargains; by the injudicious management of business; by bold adventures; and by direct profusion. The guilt in the different cases may vary somewhat. The general nature of the conduct, its folly, and its end, are substantially the same. There will therefore be no necessity of distinguishing it here with any particular attention.

The effects of prodigality are in many respects exactly the same with those of idleness. By both these vices property is effectually wasted. The negligent waster of property is influenced by the same motive which governs the idler; and shuns the labour of *preserving* it, as the idler the labour of *acquiring* it, from the mere love of ease. The spendthrift squanders it for a foolish fondness for the several enjoyments of which he makes it the price; from the love of show; the indulgence of whim; and the relish for luxurious and voluptuous gratification. The objects of his expense are, either in their degree or their kind, always unnecessary to its true interest and its real comfort. Passions, which ought not to be indulged; whims, which ought not to exist, much less to be cherished; govern his mind with despotic sway; and make him their absolute and miserable slave. Unsatisfied with what he is and what he has, he pines incessantly with a sickly taste for some new gratification; for objects in which he supposes happiness to lie, and in which he expects to satisfy a relish, too restless,

craving, and capricious, ever to be satisfied. His appetite is canine; not merely eating and drinking, but devouring; and although daily crammed, is still hungry.

Vanity and pride are also perpetual prompters to the prodigal; vanity which cries with an unceasing voice, "*Give, give;*" pride which never saith, "*It is enough.*" Goaded by these passions, he struggles with unceasing anxiety to outrun those around him in the splendour of dress, equipage, houses, gardens, and other objects of expense. The contest of one with many is almost necessarily unequal. It is scarcely possible that some of his competitors should not excel him in one thing, and some in another; or that, whenever he is excelled, he should not be unhappy. In its nature the strife is unwise and fruitless; because neither the spirit nor the efforts of rivalry ever made any man happy. In its progress it necessarily disappoints all his eager wishes and fond hopes. When he succeeds, the expected enjoyment expires in the very moment of success; when he fails, the disappointment makes him miserable. With all this he is preparing himself insensibly for more accumulated misery. No prodigal ever looks into his affairs; nor conjectures the extent of his expenses. Of course no prodigal ever perceives the rapidity with which his property declines. To men of this sort ruin is always nearer than they mistrust; and hastens with a celerity of which they never dreamed. While the means of expense are supposed to last, the whole host of sharpers fasten on him as their prey. The jockey cheats him in a bargain. The swindler borrows, and runs away with his money. The usurer furnishes him with loans at an enormous interest. Heedless of expense, and greedy of the enjoyments which it procures, every manufacturer of frippery, every owner of a toy-shop, selects him as his own best customer; and exchanges the merchandise of vanity-fair for his money and his lands.

Such a career Providence never suffers to last long. Unsuspected by himself, but foreseen by all around him, ruin hastening with rapid steps knocks at his door in an evil hour. The host of wretches, who pamper themselves on his extravagance while they secretly laugh at his folly, startled at the sound, are out of sight in a moment. They have indeed rioted at his expense; and might be expected

to be grateful for what he has given. But gratitude is rarely created by profusion; and the hearts of such men were never susceptible of gratitude. They have feasted on enjoyments which he furnished: but they came only to feast, not to sympathize. They have encouraged his expense; praised his generosity; admired his taste; and professed a deep interest in his happiness. But their whole business terminated in enjoying, praising, admiring, and professing. They are harpies, who gathered around him, to revel on his profusion; and sycophants, who flattered him that they might be admitted to the revel. For him, for any other human being, they never exercised a generous thought: a sympathizing feeling; an honest good-will. The house of suffering has no charms for *them*. They came only to get; and when they can get no longer, they come no more.

When they have taken their flight; instead of being grateful to him for the enjoyments, on which they have so long and so riotously feasted at his expense, they are among the first, most incessant, and most clamorous, of of those who load him with censure. Instead of pitying his calamities; calamities into which they have persuaded, urged, and flattered him; they make both him and them the butt of ridicule; a mark for scorn to shoot at; and persuade the world to forget, that they have been eminently the causes of his destruction, by vociferating their contempt of his folly.

In the mean time, his door is thronged by a set of duns, and a host of bailiffs. His houses and lands pass away to the sharpers, who have been long fattening upon his spoils His equipage, his furniture, even the very bed on which he has slept, is struck off to the highest bidder. The sprightly sound of the viol and the harpsicord, is succeeded by the rude hammer of the auctioneer. Broken in fortune, and broken in heart, the miserable squanderer, and his miserable family, quit their luxurious mansion, and shelter themselves in a solitary hovel.

*This wretched career is rendered more sinful, and more unhappy, by the avarice which regularly haunts the prodigal.* Addison, in a beautiful allegory, informs us, that luxury and avarice were formerly at war; that, after various vicis-

situdes of fortune, they agreed at length to a permanent peace; on the condition that luxury should dismiss plenty from his service, and avarice poverty; their respective ministers of state; and that avarice should become the minister of luxury, and luxury of avarice by turns. Since that period, he informs us, luxury ministers to avarice, and avarice to luxury. Every prodigal is, in intention at least, a luxurious man. Every prodigal almost is avaricious. He grasps at money eagerly, that he may find the means of continuing his darling profusion; and covets with as craving an appetite that he may spend, as the miser that he may hoard. Like the miserable sufferers described by Isaiah, he *will not spare even his own brother,* but *will snatch on the right hand, and still be hungry; and devour on the left, and will not be satisfied.*

*Equally exposed is he to the sin of fraud; as perpetrated upon his fellow-men.* Peculiarly is he of the number of those *wicked who borrow and never pay.* No man is more lavish of promises, notes, and bonds; and no man more stinted in discharging his honest debts. The farmer, mechanic, and manufacturer, are peculiarly the objects of his fraud. The debts which he pays at all, are those which he is pleased to style debts of honour: the debts of luxury; debts contracted to furnish the means of splendour and voluptuousness. The necessaries of life are objects too humble to be ranked in the list of his enjoyments. Insignificant in themselves, that is, as he estimates them, they are not felt to be deserving of his attention. Those who furnish them also, are too modest and too quiet to compel his regard. Those who gratify the demands of show and pleasure, are, in his view, persons of higher consequence; and are usually too clamorous, and too persevering in their demands, to suffer them to be turned away by a mere succession of empty promises. *Their* claims are of course first satisfied. Not *the rich, but the poor* and *the hungry,* are here *sent away empty.*

*The same necessity which drives him to promise-breaking, urges him also into its twin vice of lying.* He wants money daily; and as the ordinary means of obtaining it fail, he resorts to every art, and fetch, and falsehood, to supply his pressing necessities. A true account of his circumstances and designs would prevent every supply. To falsehood

therefore and to trick he betakes himself, as the most obvious means of relieving his immediate wants. In this manner he becomes, within a moderate period, a common cheat, and a common liar.

*Nor is the prodigal much less in danger from drunkenness.* The peculiar distress which attends the consciousness of embarrassed affairs, made up of the strong pressure of wants without the means of relieving them, a continual apprehension of approaching ruin, united with an insurmountable reluctance to make any efforts towards preventing it, edged and pointed by a succession of duns, mortified pride, vanishing pleasures, and clamorous appetites; this peculiar distress is a powerful and frequent cause of habitual intoxication. The unhappy being who is the subject of such distress instinctively hunts, but hunts in vain, for relief, and even for consolation. Despair meets him at every corner. Often, the only alleviation which presents itself to his afflicted eye, is the terrible resort to the transient stupefaction of strong drink. Thus the forlorn wretch, with a varied indeed but always downward course, makes his situation worse and worse; and hurries himself to final ruin by the very means on which he fastens for relief.

*Nor is the prodigal in small danger of becoming a suicide.* He has lived, for a length of time, in the gratification of pride, the enjoyment of conscious superiority, and an uninterrupted course of voluptuous indulgence. When the dreams of greatness are over, and the riot of pleasure has ceased, the change to want and degradation is often too sudden, and almost always too great, to be borne with equanimity. In the earlier moments of desperation, it is not uncommon to see the prodigal betake himself for refuge from the load of humiliation and despair, to poison, the pistol, or the halter. *Among those who become suicides in the possession of their reason, a more numerous list is no where to be found, than that which is composed of ruined prodigals.* Few men have sufficient fortitude to sustain, without shrinking, the excruciating evils to which persons of this description regularly hurry themselves: excruciating I mean *to such men.* We do indeed meet, at times, beings who, like disturbed ghosts, haunt places of public resort; and labour to keep in the remembrance of man-

kind the shadows, shreds, and tatters, of their former gaiety and splendour; and serve, as waymarks, to warn the traveller of his approach to a quagmire or a precipice. But far more commonly they shrink from the public eye, and from the neglect and contempt which they are conscious of having merited; and not unfrequently hide themselves for ever from the sight by hurrying into the future world.

The prodigal is also *dreadfully exposed to hardness of heart*. Should he continue to live; should he become neither a suicide nor a drunkard; still the love of expense and pleasure, grown by indulgence into an obstinate habit, the long-continued forgetfulness of God, the total negligence of religion and all its duties, the entire absorption in the present, and the absolute disregard of the future, universally attendant on this mode of life, naturally render the heart callous to every divine impression. A man who thus eagerly forgets God, ought certainly to expect, that God will forget him. For no man says to the Almighty, more frequently or more uniformly, *Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways*. From the house of God, from the Scriptures, nay, even from prayer, the last hope of miserable man, he voluntarily cuts himself off. What prospects must he then form concerning his future being?

The family of the prodigal share necessarily in most of his calamities, and almost necessarily in many of his sins. A great part of the same temptations arrest them of course. A great part of the sins are provided for them, and regularly served up. Should they escape from moral ruin, the event would be little short of a miracle, unless it should be accomplished by an early and timely failure of the means of sin. The sufferings to which they are exposed are numberless. The prodigal, fascinated by show and pleasure, cannot attend to the education of his children. He cannot spare from his own enjoyments, in his view indispensable, the means of education abroad; particularly an education at all suited to their original circumstances, the expectations which he has forced them to form, and the wishes which they have reasonably as well as naturally cherished. Religious instruction, admonition, and reproof, a prodigal never can give. He who does not pray for himself, cannot be expected to pray for his family. The parent who does

not frequent the house of God, will soon see it forsaken by his children. Thus the education of his children will be deserted by the prodigal. The invaluable season of childhood and youth will be lost, and those early impressions, both economical and religious, those important habits, on which the good of this life, and of the life to come, is in a great measure founded, are never established in their minds.

To their comfortable settlement, whatever may be his wishes, he has voluntarily lost the power to contribute. Before the period arrives at which this important object is to be accomplished, his wife, if she has not died of a broken heart, and her children, usually see him a beggar; and follow him to the hovel, which has become his only shelter. Hence, if they survive the ruin of their hopes, the children are soon turned into the world, to make their way through all the thorns and briers which regularly embarrass the path of persons in such a situation. The hand which feeds the young ravens when they cry, does indeed usually feed *them*. Earthly friends, at times also, they may find; and sometimes may be regarded by strangers with compassion and tenderness, which they never experienced from him who gave them birth.

## REMARKS.

1. *By these considerations, parents are taught the incalculable importance of educating their children to industry and economy.*

Revolve for a moment the miserable character, circumstances, and end, of those who have been the subjects of this discourse. Who would be willing, who would not shudder at the thought, that such would be the character, such the circumstances, and such the end, of his own children? How shall this dreadful catastrophe be prevented? Under God, only by a faithful education of children to industry and economy; by habituation to some useful, active business; or some diligent, sedentary employment; by thorough instructions, and a persuasive example. These are the fountains of sustenance to human life. A fortune bequeathed to children, or provided for them at an earlier

period, instead of being a secure provision for their future wants, is commonly a mere incitement to ruin; a bounty given to idleness; a watchword to begin the career of profusion.

The Jews are said, during some periods at least of their existence as a people, to have educated their children universally in active business; and to have adopted proverbially, this aphorism, that *he who does not bring up his child to useful industry, brings him up to be a beggar and a nuisance.* It is to be fervently wished, that all Christian parents would adopt the same maxim, and thus prepare their children to become blessings both to themselves and mankind. It has been repeatedly observed in these discourses, that industry and economy are not natural to man, and can only be established by habituation. These habits must both be begun in the morning of life; or there is danger that they will never be begun successfully. As no man, consistently with his plain duty, can be excused from being industrious and economical himself; so no man can be justified for a moment, who does not effectually communicate both industry and economy to his children. He who at the first made labour the employment of mankind, and who afterward commanded to gather up the fragments that nothing might be lost, will admit no excuse for the neglect of these duties, whether they respect ourselves or our offspring. In this subject parents and children of both sexes are equally concerned. Both parents are bound to teach their children; and their children of both sexes are bound to learn, to be industrious, and to be economical; to fill up their time with useful employments; to methodize it, that it may be thus filled up; and to feel that the loss of time, the neglect of talents, and the waste of property, are all serious violations of their duty to God. The parents are bound to inspire, and the children to imbibe, a contempt and abhorrence for that silly, worthless frivolity, to which so many children, of fashionable parents especially, are trained; that sinful waste of the golden hours of life; that sickly devotion to amusement; that shameful, pitiable dependance on trifling, to help them along, even tolerably, through their present tedious, dragging existence. Few persons are more to be pitied, as certainly few are more to

be blamed, than those who find their enjoyment only in diversions; and cling to a ride, a dance, a visit, a play, or a novel, to keep them from sinking into gloom and despondence. Industrious persons, who spend their time in useful pursuits, are the only persons whose minds are serene, contented, and cheerful. If we wish happiness for our children then, we shall carefully educate them to an industrious life.

Let no parent, at the same time, forget what alarming temptations, and what gross sins, surround idleness and profusion. This consideration will, if any thing will, compel parents to educate their children in this manner. The parent's fortune is here of no significance. The heir of a fortune is far more exposed to all these evils, than he who has none. If he is to go through life with a fortune, he is to be taught to earn and to preserve property. Without this instruction, he will probably, ere long, be beggared, tempted without any defence to multiplied sins, and become a liar, a cheat, a drunkard, and perhaps a suicide. What parent would not tremble at the thought, that his own negligence would entail these evils upon his offspring?

2. *Young persons, whatever may have been their education, are here forcibly taught to pursue an industrious and economical life.*

The children of wealthy parents are generally prone to believe, that they are destined, not to usefulness, but to enjoyment; and that they may be idle, therefore, without a crime. No opinion is more groundless; and very few are more fatal. God made all mankind to be useful. This character he requires of them without conditions. He who does not assume it, will be found inexcusable at the final day. Every human ear ought to tingle, and every heart to shudder, at the doom of the unprofitable servant in the gospel.

Still more prone are youths to believe, that profusion is honourable; and to shrink from the imputation of niggardly conduct. There is no more absolute absurdity, than the supposition, that prodigality and generosity are the same thing. They are not even allied. Generosity consists in giving freely, when a valuable purpose demands it; and

with a disposition benevolently inclined to promote that purpose. Prodigality is the squandering of property, not for valuable, but base and contemptible purposes; for the mere gratification of voluptuousness, vanity, and pride. All these gratifications are mean, selfish, and despicable. The generous man feels the value of property: the prodigal has no sense of this value. The generous man gives, because what he gives will do real good to the recipient; the prodigal, because he cares nothing about property, except as it enables him to acquire reputation, to gratify his pride, to make an ostentatious display of wealth, or to outstrip and mortify a rival. In all this there is not an approach towards generosity. On the contrary, the motives are grovelling and contemptible; and the manner in which they are exhibited to the eye, is disingenuous and hypocritical, a gaudy dress upon a loathsome skeleton. But the prodigal fails of the very reward which he proposes as the chief object of his expense. In spite of all his wishes and efforts, even weak men perceive that he is totally destitute of generosity; and those who most flatter are the first to forsake him; while to shelter their own meanness and treachery they proclaim, more loudly than any others, his weakness, faults, and miseries, to mankind.

Let every youth, then, fasten his eye on this wretched character, this pernicious conduct, and this deplorable end. His own exposure let him strongly feel. Let him realize, with solemn emotions of mind, that idleness and profusion are broad and beaten roads to ruin, both in this world, and that which is to come. With these views, let him devote all his time to some useful and upright employment; and thus make every day yield its blessings. What he acquires by commendable industry, let him faithfully preserve by prudent, watchful care. In this manner he will become honourable in the sight of wise and good men, a blessing to himself, to his family, and to mankind; while he will, at the same time, fulfil one important end of his being.

# SERMON CXXIII.

## EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

### FRAUD.

*Thou shalt not steal.*—EXOD. XX. 15.

HAVING considered *the frauds which men practise upon themselves and their families,* I shall now proceed to examine the

II. *Head of discourse proposed at that time;* viz. *The frauds which we practise upon others.*

Of these, the

1st *class which I shall mention, is those which respect borrowing the property of others.*

Frauds of this kind are so numerous, that it is impossible here to mention them all; and so common, that most persons practise them without even suspecting themselves to be criminal. Still they are frauds, and crimes which admit of no excuse.

Of this transgression persons are guilty, *whenever they suffer that which has been loaned to them, to be injured through their own negligence.* This evil is extremely common; and by a great part of mankind is scarcely regarded, unless when the injury is considerable, as being censurable at all. Still it is obviously a violation of confidence, a falsification of the terms upon which the loan was given and received. No man ever lent any thing of any value, with an agreement on his part that it should be injured unnecessarily by the borrower. No man ever received a loan with a profession on his part, that he expected to injure the thing lent, unless in cases where the nature of the transaction obviously involved the injury, and a consequent compensation. This, it will be observed, is a case properly arranged under the head of *bargains,* and not of *loans.* Persons

are guilty of this kind of fraud also, *when they return, instead of a consumable or perishable article which they have borrowed, what is of inferior value.* We often borrow those things which perish in the use. In this case not a small number of individuals satisfy their consciences, if they return the same thing in kind and quantity, although plainly inferior in its value. A scrupulous spirit of integrity would induce us rather to return somewhat more in value than we have received, that we may make due satisfaction for the property loaned, and for the particular convenience which it has furnished *us.*

Another fraud of the same nature is practised *whenever we unreasonably detain in our possession whatever has been loaned to us.* Most persons, probably, are in a greater or less degree chargeable with this fault. A want of punctuality in this respect is a serious evil, extending very far; and often intruding not a little upon the peace and comfort of good neighbourhood. But there are persons who go through life, borrowing without thinking of returning that which they borrow, and who thus doubly tax the good nature of those around them. This conduct is totally contrary to good faith and to plain justice. Every borrower in his application for every loan is understood, and knows that he is understood, by the lender to engage, not only to return that which he borrows, but to return it within a reasonable time. It is unjust and unkind to retain the property of the lender beyond his consent; to use it beyond his permission; and thus to reward his kindness with injury.

Of a similar fraud are we guilty, *when we employ that which is lent for purposes and in modes not contemplated by the lender.* Multitudes of mankind are guilty of this crime; and in ways almost innumerable. All our right to the use of the loan, not only as to the fact, but also as to the manner and the degree, is derived solely from the consent of the owner. To that which he has not given, we have not and cannot have any right. We are bound therefore scrupulously to use what we borrow, within the limits of his permission. When we transgress these limits, we obviously violate the plain dictates of common justice; and are therefore inexcusable.

There is perhaps no fraud of which youths sent abroad for their education are so frequently guilty, or to which they are so strongly solicited by temptation, as one strongly resembling this which I have described. They are of course intrusted by their parents with property, necessary, or supposed to be necessary, to defray the expenses of their education. Every parent has his own views concerning the manner in which this property is to be expended. This manner the parent usually prescribes to his child, and has an absolute right to prescribe it. The *property* is his own: the *child* is his own. Both the manner, therefore, and the expense, of the child's education he has an absolute right to control. The parent's prescription then the child cannot escape without fraud; nor can he violate it without filial impiety.

When such a youth expends the property intrusted to him by his parents, in any manner or to any degree beyond his parent's choice; so far as that choice is made known to him; he is guilty of fraud, and violates the command which I am discussing. Nay, if he is reasonably satisfied concerning what his parent's choice *would be*, although it has not been explicitly declared, he is bound scrupulously to regard it in all his conduct; and to expend no more, and for no other purposes, than those which are involved in his parent's pleasure. Nor can he, consistently with his plain duty, pursue different objects, and conduct himself in a different manner, from what his parent has prescribed, without being guilty of similar fraud.

The parent may not indeed, and probably will not, often punish his child for these transgressions. Often he may quietly acquiesce in the wrong. Still the conduct is not the less sinful; nor the child the less guilty. Human tribunals fail of punishing many crimes; but they do not for this reason cease to be crimes. If a child would avoid sin; if he would, in this respect, be blameless in the sight of God; he must direct all his expenses, and regulate all his conduct, conscientiously, according to the will and prescription of his parents. To this end he must limit his wants to the allowed measure of his expenses; and act scrupulously as he would act if his parents were continually present.

2. *Another species of frauds is practised in what is called trespassing on the property of others.*

Frauds of this nature are very numerous, and greatly diversified. Many persons, without being sensible of doing any injustice, walk through the enclosures of others, and tread down their grass, grain, and other valuable productions of their labour. Others leave open the entrances to their enclosures; and thus expose the fruits of the earth to damage, and often to destruction. Others still plunder their gardens, orchards, and fields, of such fruits particularly as are delicious. Others plunder their forests of wood both for their own consumption and for the market. Both these acts are, however, falsely called *trespasses.* No actions of man are more obviously *thefts,* in the full sense. Accordingly they are spoken of, in the language of common sense and common custom, only under the name of stealing. Others suffer their cattle, accustomed to break through enclosures, to go at large in their own fields; and thus, in reality, turn them into the fields of their neighbours. To dwell no longer on this part of the subject, multitudes habitually neglect to repair their own walls and fences; and in this manner leave a continual passage for their cattle into the fields of their neighbours.

A very different set of trespasses (I do not mean in the legal sense; for I know not what name law would give them), and undertaken with very different views, is found *in the operations of that spirit of vulgar mischief, which through envy, or some other base passion, cherishes a contemptible hostility against the improvement and beauty of building, fencing, and planting, formed by its prosperous neighbours.* This spirit prompts the unworthy minds in which it dwells, to mar and deface handsome buildings and fences; to root up or cut down trees and shrubs planted for shade and for ornament. This spirit is no other than that of *the dog in the manger.* It will neither enjoy the good itself, nor suffer any others to enjoy it. One would think, that, in the view of such minds, beauty and elegance were public nuisances; and that to have contributed to adorn one's country with the delightful productions of nature and art, is a trespass upon the common good.

Another class of frauds, possessing the same nature, is

seen in most places, at least in this country, *in the abuses of public property.* Public buildings are almost every where injured and defaced; the windows are broken; the doors, wainscoting, pillars, and other appurtenances formed of wood, are shamefully carved and hacked; the courts, balustrades, and other vulnerable articles, are mangled and destroyed. In a word, injuries of this nature are endless; and all of them are scandalous frauds, useless to the perpetrators, wounding to every man of integrity and taste; discouragements to public improvment, and sources of public deformity and disgrace.

Another class of these frauds is denoted by the general name *peculation.*

It will be useless for me to dwell on what nations have so long and so loudly complained of: the plunder of the public by statesmen, commissioners, and contractors; men who appear to feel a prescriptive right to fatten themselves on the spoils of the community. There are I fear but few men, comparatively, who feel themselves bound to deal with *the public, or with any body of their fellow-men,* agreeably to the same strict and equitable principles, which most persons acknowledge to be indispensable in dealing with *individuals.* For services rendered to public bodies, almost all men demand a greater reward than they would dare to claim from individuals. For commodities sold to them they charge a higher price. In settling accounts with them they claim greater allowances: and in every transaction plainly intend to get more, than custom and equity have permitted in the private business of mankind. The single article of *perquisites* is a gulf of voracity which has no bottom. The only rule, by which this undefined class of demands seems to be controlled, is to claim whatever the person indebted can be expected to give.

The common doctrine among all the claimants to whom I have referred, appears to be, that *there is no wrong in demanding more of public bodies for the same service, or the same commodity, than of individuals, because public bodies are more able to pay.* Justice, on the contrary, affixes the same value on the same thing. This value will be affixed by every honest man; and will be his only rule of compensa-

tion for his commodities or his labours, whoever may be the purchaser or the employer.

In every one of the cases which I have specified, the persons concerned defraud their fellow-men of their property, and cheat themselves out of their duty and their salvation. But they cannot cheat their Maker. The all-searching Eye surveys with a terrible inspection these workers of iniquity; and, at the final day, will be found to have traced every secret winding, every snaky path, every false pretence, and every flattering self-justification of fraud. At that awful period, how many persons will be found to be cheats, who in this world sustained the character of fair dealers; and were regarded by all around them as honest men!

3. *Another class of frauds is attendant upon bargains.*

These, like the former classes, are very numerous; and are varied continually by the circumstances of the bargain, and the ingenuity, negligence, and dishonesty, of the parties.

*An honest bargain is that, and that only, in which an equivalent is given and received; in which* the value of the commodities in each case being supposed to be known, *the fair market price is mutually allowed.* The market price is, in all ordinary circumstances, the equitable price; and wherever it is known, will be cheerfully paid by an honest man. Where it cannot be known, such men will settle their contracts as equitably as they can; each designing faithfully to render an equivalent for what he receives. Every bargain not formed on these principles is unjust; and, if thus formed intentionally, is dishonest. But how different from these are the principles upon which bargains are very extensively made in this country, and but too probably in others also!

Among the innumerable frauds practised in this vast field of human business I shall specify the following.

*Multitudes of persons, when forming bargains, misrepresent or conceal the state of the markets.* Most men profess to be willing to be governed in their dealings by the market price. But great numbers of these very men intend to buy for less, and sell for more. Hence they carefully conceal

this price from those with whom they deal; and thus buy at diminished, and sell at enhanced, prices. This conduct is plain dishonesty; and would not deceive even the subject of it, were he not blinded by his own avarice. He perfectly knows, that his neighbour would not buy nor sell on these terms, except from his ignorance; and that the advantage which he gains, is gained only from his neighbour's misapprehension of the commodities in question. Can an honest man take this advantage? Would any man of reputation justify himself in taking it of a child? Why not of a child, as well as of a man? Because, it will be answered, the child knows not the worth of what he buys or sells. Neither, in the case specified, does the man. Would he, who takes this advantage, be willing that his neighbour should take it of *him?* The answer to this question needs not be given. It is plain, then, that the conduct referred to is unjust and fraudulent.

There are many persons *who directly misrepresent the market price.* These men feel satisfied if they do not palpably lie; if, for example, they report what this price has lately been; what they have heard somebody declare it to be; or what price has been given by an individual who has sold at a high or bought at a low price; both very different from the general one. All these are mere fetches, used by a dishonest mind to deceive itself, and to defraud others.

Another palpable fraud of this class is, *the use of false weights and measures.* These are often used, when they are *known,* and often when they are *suspected,* to be false; and more frequently still, when they are *suffered to become defective through inattention.* In this the man is apt to feel himself excused, because he is not intentionally fraudulent: not remembering, that whenever it is in his power, God has required him to *do justly,* and not merely *not to design to do unjustly.* He has given him no permission to sin through negligence. Weights and measures are often formed of such materials as to ensure decay and diminution. Whenever this is known to be the case, the proprietor is unpardonable, if he does not by frequent examinations prevent the injustice. The wrong he cannot but foresee; and the remedy is always and entirely in his power. If we love justice as we ought, we shall take all those measures which

are necessary to accomplish it. He who is resolved to *do to others what he would that others should do to him,* will never suffer it to remain undone for want of exertions which demand so little self-denial.

Whenever a man begins to do wrong through negligence, he will soon do it through design. Indifference to sin is the next step to the love of it. The only safety in this case, and all others of the like nature, is to *resist the beginnings of evil.* If our opposition to it be not begun here, it will never be begun. Every smaller transgression prepares the way for a greater. Every gross villain has become such by small beginnings. "No man (says the Latin proverb) becomes abandoned at once." He who begins to backslide without compunction, will find his remaining course only downward; and will descend with continually increasing velocity to the bottom.

Another prominent iniquity of this class is, *selling commodities which are unsound and defective, under direct professions that they are sound and good.* This is sometimes done with palpable lying; sometimes with indefinite and hypocritical insinuations. Agents and men, who buy to sell again, often assert their wares to be good, because those of whom they received them have declared them to be good. These declarations are often believed, because the agent professes, or at least appears, to believe them; while, in truth, he does not give them the least credit.

One of the grossest impositions of this nature is practised upon the public, in advertising and selling nostrums as safe and valuable medicines. These are ushered into newspapers with a long train of pompous declarations, almost always false, and always delusive. The silly purchaser buys and uses the medicines, chiefly or only because it is sold by a respectable man, and under the sanction of a splendid advertisment, to which that respectable man lends his countenance. Were such men to decline this unfortunate and indefensible employment, the medicines would probably fall into absolute discredit; and health, and limbs, and life, would in many instances be preserved from unnecessary destruction.

Another specimen of similar fraud is practised *in concealing the defects of what we sell.* This is the general art,

and villany of that class of men who are customarily styled jockeys; a class unhappily comprehending multitudes, who would receive the appellation with astonishment and disdain. The common subterfuge of these men is this, "that they give no false accounts concerning their commodities; that the purchaser has eyes of his own, and must judge for himself." No defence can be more lame and wretched; and scarcely any more impudent. A great proportion of vendables are subject to defects which no purchaser can descry. Every purchaser is, therefore, obliged to depend on the seller for information concerning them. All this the seller perfectly knows; and, if he be an honest man, will certainly give the information to the purchaser: because in the same situation he would wish it to be given to himself. At the same time, no purchaser would buy these articles if he knew their defects, unless at a diminished price. The actual purchaser is therefore, in colloquial language, *taken in;* and taken in by palpable villany.

Another specimen of the same nature is furnished by *the practice of depreciating the value of such commodities as we wish to buy. "It is naught, it is naught," saith the buyer; but, when he hath gone his way, he boasteth.* Such was the conduct of men in the days of Solomon. We have ample proof, that human nature now is not in this respect altered for the better. The ignorant, the modest, and the necessitous; persons who should be the last to suffer from fraud; are in this way often made its victims. A decisive tone, and confident airs, in men better dressed, and supposed to know better than themselves, easily bear down persons so circumstanced, and persuade them to sell their commodities for less than they are plainly worth. The purchaser, in the mean time, as soon as they are out of hearing, boasts of his gainful bargain; and trumpets, without a blush, the value of the articles which he had before decried.

4. *Another class of frauds is connected with the contraction and payment of debts.*

The first transgression of this nature which I shall mention, *is the contraction of debts with clear conviction that we possess no means of discharging them; and that we shall, in all probability, possess no such means hereafter; at least, within any reasonable period of payment.*

Multitudes of persons covet enjoyments, in the possession of others, to such a degree, that they are willing to acquire them if they can, without troubling themselves about paying for them. Such persons are often professed cheats, and triumph in the success of their impositions. But there are others, who regard themselves as honest men; and would be not a little surprised, as well as wounded, at the suspicion of fraudulent designs in their conduct. Most or all of these men form some loose, indefinite design of paying their debts; but, instead of providing the necessary means for this purpose, trust to some future casualty. They will tell the creditor who charges them with dishonest conduct, that, although they did indeed know themselves to be destitute of property, and of any rational expectations of future property, when the debt was contracted, yet they hoped that in the course of events they should, in some manner or other, become able to discharge it. In this case, they will add, they should have discharged it both willingly and faithfully. What they thus allege is probably in many instances true. The persons in question do not form a direct intention to defraud their creditors. Thus far their honesty goes. But here it stops. They form no design, direct or indirect, to take effectual measures to do their creditors justice. They do not conscientiously abstain from contracting debts, until they know that they shall be able to cancel them by fair payment. On the contrary, they contract them when they know themselves to be unable, and to be unpossessed of any fair probable means of being able at a future time. In all this they are, although often without suspecting it, grossly dishonest.

Another sin very nearly akin to this is, *contracting debts without perceiving any means of payment to be in our power.* Those who transgress in this manner, feel satisfied, *if they do not know themselves to be unable to pay.* Were they evangelically honest, they would take effectual care to see whether they were able or not. Often, by overrating their property, their efforts, or the markets, they feel a loose conviction that they shall possess this power; but take no pains to render the fact certain, or even probable. Such morality can result only from absolute insensibility of mind to the great duty of doing justly; an entire ignorance of what it de-

mands; and a total forgetfulness of exposure to the divine indignation. We are bound, before we receive, before we become willing to receive, our neighbour's property, to know that we have means, clearly probable, of paying him; otherwise we wantonly subject him to the loss of it; and differ very little, as moral beings, from thieves and robbers. If we are in doubt concerning either the probability or the sufficiency of these means, it is our duty to detail them fairly to the person with whom we are dealing. If in this case he is disposed to intrust us with his property, and we afterward make faithful efforts to cancel the debt; I do not see that we are chargeable with fraud, although we should fail. He who contracts a debt without discerning that he has probable means of discharging it, differs in no material respect from a swindler. *He* plunders his neighbour from indifference to justice; *the swindler* from contempt of it. In the view of common sense, in the sight of God, the moral character of both is essentially the same.

Another transgression of the same general nature, is *neglecting to pay our debts at the time.* There are many persons whose general character, as honest men, is fair; who yet in this respect are extremely deserving of censure. They contract debts, which they engage to discharge within a given time. This time is therefore a part of the contract: a ground on which the bargain is made; a condition on which the price was calculated. This obvious truth is understood by all men; and makes a part of the language of every bargain in which credit is given. To the expectation formed by the creditor, of receiving his debt at the time specified, the debtor has voluntarily given birth. It is an expectation therefore which he is bound to fulfil. If he does not take every lawful measure in his power to enable himself to fulfil it; or if he does not fulfil it when it is in his power; he is guilty of fraud; of depriving his neighbour, not perhaps of design, but by a guilty negligence, of a part of his property.

The delay of payment beyond the appointed time is, in all instances, injurious, and in some almost as injurious to the creditor, as an absolute refusal to pay would originally have been. The real value of a debt, where the security is sufficient, is, among men of business, estimated according to

the time when the payment is reasonably expected. Thus notes, bonds, and other obligations for money, when given by men known to be punctual in the discharge of their debts, pass in the market for their nominal value; and are received in payments with no other discount, than that which arises from the distance of the period when they become due. Those given by negligent men are, on the contrary, considered as depreciated from the beginning; and that, exactly in proportion to the negligence of the signer. Of this sum, be it what it may, the negligent man defrauds his creditor.

The law of God required, in accordance with the doctrine which I am urging, that the sun should not be suffered to go down upon the hire of the labourer. The spirit of punctuality here enjoined ought to be found in all men. The engagements which we make, we are bound as honest men to fulfil. The expectations which we knowingly excite in the minds of those with whom we deal, we are required to satisfy; and when we fail, either voluntarily or negligently, we are inexcusable.

The last iniquity of this species which I shall mention, is *the payment of debts with something of less value than that which we possess.*

It has been doubtless observed, that I have all along throughout this discourse chiefly passed over in silence those gross frauds, which are the direct objects of criminal prosecution. Such is my intention here. I shall pass by the gross iniquities of passing counterfeit currency, forging obligations and endorsements, and others of the like nature. To reprove these crimes cannot be necessary in this place. I have therefore confined, and shall still confine, myself to those which are esteemed smaller transgressions, and are less observed and less dreaded by mankind.

There are some kinds of currency, whose *real* value is inferior to that which is *nominal.* Coin is in some countries and at some times alloyed below the common standard. It is also very often worn down below the standard weight. Paper currency is also in many instances subjected to a discount, wherever its true value is understood. Debts are very often paid with this depreciated currency, without any notice given by the debtor of its depreciation.

Debts are paid also, to a considerable extent, in commodities. In these there are often defects, in kind or quantity, not readily perceivable by the creditor, and, what is much more unhappy, concealed or not disclosed by the debtor.

Often debts are paid by labour and services. These, not unfrequently, are stinted with respect to the time through which the labour ought to extend; the skill and thorough execution which ought to be employed; the care which ought to be used; and, universally, the completeness of the service engaged, and therefore justly expected, by the creditor. In every case of this nature, it is the design of the debtor to gain something by the means and mode of paying the debt, which he would not have gained had he paid it in undebased coin; and which he would not have gained by a fair, honest fulfilment of the original terms of the contract. Whenever the debtor feels, that in discharging his debts he has acquired something from the creditor not involved in the plain terms of the contract, he may be assured that his mode of payment has involved in it a fraud, and that he has acted the part of a cheat.

All these may, and often do, seem to the perpetrators crimes of little moment: and it will perhaps be no easy matter to convince them of the contrary. I wish such persons to remember the great maxim taught by the unvarying experience of man; that he who allows himself to be dishonest in one thing, will soon be dishonest in all things. I wish them still more solemnly to remember, that God is a witness of all their fraudulent conduct, however it may be concealed from mankind; and that, although they may cheat men, they cannot cheat God.

5. *Another enormous class of frauds is composed of breaches of trust.*

Upon this unlimited subject my observations must be few and summary. Frauds of this kind are found in the servant and the monarch, and in all the intervening classes of mankind. They fill with complaints every mouth, and haunt every human concern. To describe them, demand the contents of a library: to name them, would be to recount most of the business of man. As they exist every where, so all men are familiarized to them. Of course, it is the less necessary to detail them here. There is also

but one opinion concerning them, and concerning their authors. They are all by the universal voice pronounced to be frauds, and their authors to be knaves and villains.

He who assumes an employment, engages in the very assumption to discharge the duties which it obviously involves. If he fails, he fails of his duty; if he negligently or voluntarily fails, he is palpably a dishonest man. The expectations which we knowingly excite in others, we are indispensably bound to fulfil. Nothing less than this will satisfy the commands of God, or the dictates of an unwarped conscience. Nothing less will ever acquire or secure a fair reputation. I shall only add, that there is no easy or sure method of accomplishing this invaluable object, but *to begin early, and to go on with inflexible perseverance.*

## REMARKS.

1. *The subject which has been under consideration presents us with a very humiliating and painful specimen of human corruption.*

The duty of rendering justice to our neighbour is one of the plainest dictates of the law, written on the hearts of men; one of the first demands of conscience; one of the prime injunctions of God. Accordingly, no duty has been more readily, universally, or absolutely, acknowledged or demanded by mankind. The bounds also which separate justice from injustice, are often defined with mathematical exactness, almost always clearly known, and rarely capable of being mistaken. Yet in how many ways, forms, and varieties, is this duty violated! By how many individuals! Of how many classes! Who, however wise, honourable, or excellent; however reverenced or beloved, is not at times the victim of fraud and the dupe of cunning! The known instances are innumerable. What endless multitudes are probably unknown, except by the omniscient eye! How great a part of human time and talents has been employed only in fraud! One hundred and twenty thousand persons, in the city of London alone, are declared by the judicious Colquhoun to derive the whole or the chief part of their subsistence from fraudulent practices. Here, villany of this nature has become a science; and is pursued,

not merely without remorse, but with system; with a coolness which laughs at morality; an ingenuity which baffles detection; an industry which would do honour to virtue; and a success which overwhelms the mind with amazement. All these things exist in the capital of that country, which has been more distinguished than any other for knowledge, morality, and religion.

But London is not alone concerned in this iniquity. It prevails wherever rights are claimed or property exists. In our own country, so young and distinguished beyond most others for the moral character of its inhabitants, it prevails in a manner which ought to cover us with shame and sorrow. Frauds of all the kinds which have been mentioned, are not only practised but avowed. Nay, many of them have ceased to wear the name of frauds. Oppressive bargains are customarily styled by those who make them, *good bargains;* and boasted of as specimens of ingenuity, skill, and success. Debts, in multiplied instances, are contracted without honesty, and withholden by mere fraud. Even the settlement of estates furnishes often gross exhibitions of oppression and cheating; and the widow and the fatherless are made a prey. Why is this done? Because the deceased is gone, and cannot detect the iniquity; because those whom he has left behind, are without defence and without remedy.

A great part of the business of legislators is the prevention of fraud. To detect and punish it is the chief employment of judicial tribunals. How immense have been the labours of both; and to how vast an extent have they laboured in vain!

How frequently do we ourselves see character, safety, and the soul, all hazarded for a pittance of gain, contemptible in itself; and of no consequence to him who cheats his neighbour, and sells himself to acquire it! With what unceasing toil, and under what hard bondage, does the miser wear and waste his life, to filch from those around him little gleanings of property, merely to bury it in his chest, and without daring to use it for himself or his family! How frequently do swindlers and gamblers, like the troubled ghosts of antiquity, haunt places of public resort; and stare in open day, and in circles of decent men, until the hour of

darkness arrives; when they may again, like their kindred vampires, satiate themselves upon rottenness and corruption!

How often is war made; how often are oceans of blood spilt; lives destroyed in millions; and immense portions of human happiness extinguished; merely to plunder others of their property!

To all these evils, instruction, example, laws, punishments, conscience, the word of God, and the prospect of damnation, oppose their force and terror in vain. Prudence and policy contend against it with as little success. All nations have pronounced honesty to be more profitable than any other conduct. Poverty on the one hand, and infamy on the other, have ever threatened the intentional knave with a whip of scorpions. Still he walks onward coolly and steadily, unmoved either by the remonstrances of earth and heaven, or the dangers of hell.

2. *These observations shew the vast importance of fixing in our own minds, and in the minds of our children, the strongest sense and the most vigorous habits of exact evangelical integrity.*

He who wishes to live well here and to be happy hereafter, must in all his intentional dealings ask, as an all-controlling question, what is right? and make all things bend to the answer. "*Fiat justitia; ruat cœlum,*" ought to be the governing maxim of private as well as public life. Of all virtues, justice and truth are the first in order, the first in importance. To them every thing ought to give way. If they are permitted to rule, man cannot fail to be virtuous, amiable, and happy.

But every moral truth, and every moral precept, is of more consequence to children, and may be made of more use to them, than it can be to others. Good seed, sown in the spring-time of life, cannot ordinarily fail to produce a harvest; which will be vainly expected, if it be sown in the autumn. The parent who values the comfort, character, or salvation, of his child, will impress on his young and tender mind, in the most affecting manner possible, the incalculable excellence and importance of integrity, and the inestimable worth of an unblemished character, and in

sullied life. At this hopeful period, the parent should inweave into the mind of his child, as a part of his constitutional thinking, a strong conviction that property itself, according to the usual dispensations of God, is to be acquired only by uprightness of conduct; and that fraud is the highway to beggary, as well as to shame. Peace of conscience, he should be taught from the first, can never dwell in the same soul with injustice: and without peace of conscience, he should know, the soul will be poor and miserable. Habitually should he remember, that the eye of God looks alway upon the heart; and that every dishonest design, word, and act, is recorded in that book, out of which he will be judged at the great day. Finally, he should learn the unvarying fact; that one fraud generates another of course: and that thus the dishonest man corrupts unceasingly his heart and his life, and is seen by all around him to be *a vessel of wrath*, daily *fitting for destruction*. All these instructions, example should enforce and sanction: and on them all prayer should invoke its efficacious blessings.

3. *These observations teach us how greatly such, as are customarily styled moral men, deceive themselves.*

Multitudes of men, who sustain this character, censure preachers for dwelling so frequently on *the doctrines* of the gospel, and for not introducing oftener its *moral precepts* into their sermons. These persons regard themselves as being moral in the proper sense; and wish preachers to inculcate just such morality as they themselves practise. They pay their debts, and wish other men to pay theirs; keep true accounts; sell at the market prices; make as good bargains as they can, and get as much money as they can, in this manner. These are the things which they wish preachers to inculcate.

Such persons are yet to learn, that the morality of the gospel is wonderfully different from all this. It includes whatever I have said, in this and the preceding discourses, concerning the law of God; whatever I shall say in the succeeding ones; and more than I have said, or can say, in both. The morality of the gospel begins in an honest and good heart, disposed to *render* alway and exactly to our

neighbour *the things that are* our neighbour's, *and to God the things that are God's.* It knows not, it disdains, it abominates, the tricks, the fetches, the disguises, the concealments, the enhancements, the delays of payment, the depreciated payments, the base gains, and the double-minded character, always found in the coarse-spun morality of this world. Worldly morality aims supremely and only at *being rich;* evangelical morality at *doing that which is right.* Every person satisfied with worldly morality who hears this sermon, will probably go away from it displeased with what he will call its rigidness; and discontented to find, that what he has been accustomed to think his own stronghold furnishes him with so little, either of safety or comfort. But let him remember, that whether he is pleased or displeased, no morality short of this will answer the demands of the law of God.

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# SERMON CXXIV.

## EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

### GAMING.

*Thou shalt not steal.*—EXOD. XX. 15.

THE *frauds practised by men upon themselves and their families,* and *a variety of frauds perpetrated by mankind upon each other,* have occupied the two preceding discourses.

I shall now proceed to the consideration of another fraud of this latter class; viz. *gaming.*

Multitudes of persons professedly believe gaming to be innocent; and accordingly labour not a little to justify it to others. As they aim to clear it from all imputations of criminality; it will be both proper and necessary to consider the subject generally; that its advocates may perceive, that it is not only fraudulent, but sinful in many other respects.

The observations which I shall make on this subject will be arranged under the following heads.

I. *The evils of gaming which immediately respect others:* and,

II. *Those which immediately respect ourselves.*

*Among the evils which respect others* I observe,

1. *That gaming is, in all instances, fraud.*

By *gaming* here I intend, *that only by which property is won or lost;* and this property, by which party soever acquired, I assert to be acquired, invariably, by fraud.

*There are but two possible methods by which we can acquire property from others honestly;* viz, *either by free gift, or by rendering an equivalent for what we receive.* I need not say that property won by gaming is not obtained in either of these ways. That which is acquired, neither is nor is intended to be given: and instead of an equivalent, the gamester renders nothing for what he has received.

God, in the decalogue, has absolutely bound us *not to covet any thing which is our neighbour's.* This sin of coveting every gamester is guilty of when he sits down to win the property of his neighbour. Of this truth he gives unanswerable evidence in many ways. To win the property in question, is the only motive for which he spends his hours at the card-table and the dice-box. At the same time, he sees his companion afflicted, suffering, and even ruined, by the loss of his property, without restoring or thinking of restoring to him any part of what he has lost. Did he not covet this property, the most vulgar humanity would induce him to relieve distresses, the relief of which would demand only the sacrifice of what he did not wish to retain. Instead of this, however, we always find him speak of his winnings, when valuable, with self-gratulation and triumph; and plainly considering them as acquisitions of no small importance to his own happiness. The gamester, therefore, sinfully covets the property of his neighbour. The design to obtain it, without rendering an equivalent, is in its nature fraudulent; and will be admitted into his mind by no honest man. But this design every gamester cherishes; and in the indulgence and execution of it spends the principal part of his life. His life is, therefore, an almost uninter-

rupted course of fraud. To render this career complete, the gamester spends a great part of his time in contrivances, and labours to get, and in actually getting, the property of others for nothing. This is the very crime of the cheat, the swindler, and the thief. If the thief, when he stole; the cheat, when he bargained; and the swindler, when he borrowed his neighbour's property, voluntarily left an equivalent; how obvious is it, that his crime, though I acknowledge he might even then be in some degree criminal, would hardly be mentioned, and scarcely regarded as an immorality. The main turpitude in every one of these cases, is plainly the desiring and the taking of our neighbour's property without an equivalent. But this turpitude is entirely chargeable to the gamester.

It may however be said, that all the other persons mentioned take the property in question *covertly;* while the gamester takes it *openly,* and therefore fairly. So, I answer, does the robber.

It will be farther said, that these persons take the property *without* the consent of the owner; whereas the gamester wins it only *with* his consent. As I suppose this to be the strong-hold of all, who advocate the lawfulness of gaming, it will be proper to consider it with some attention.

In the first place, then, *this consent is never given in the manner* professedly *alleged by those who defend the practice.*

No man ever sat down to a game with an entire consent that his antagonist should win his property. I speak of those cases only, in which the property staked is considered as of some serious importance. Every person who is a party in a game of this nature, intends to win the property of his antagonist, and not to lose his own. His own he stakes, only because the stake is absolutely necessary to enable him to win that of his antagonist. Thus, instead of consenting to lose his own property, each of the parties intends merely to obtain that of his neighbour for nothing. This is the only real design of both: and this design is as unjust, and as fraudulent, as any which respects property can be. That such is the only real design, the [illegible]

in the clearest manner, by deeply lamenting his loss; and the winner, in a manner little less clear, by exulting in his gain.

Secondly. *Each of the parties expects only to win; either by superior skill or superior good fortune.*

No man ever heard of a gamester who sat down to play with a decided expectation of losing.

Thirdly. *No man has a right to yield his property to another on this condition.*

The property of every man is given to him by his Creator as to a steward; to be employed only in useful purposes. In such purposes he is indispensably bound to employ it. Every other mode of employing it is inexcusable. This doctrine I presume the gamester himself will not seriously question. The man must be lost to decency, and to common sense, who can for a moment believe, that his Creator has given any blessing to mankind for any purposes except those which are useful; or that himself and every one of his fellow-men, are not unconditionally required by God to promote useful purposes with all the means in their power; and with their property equally with other means at all times. But it will not be pretended, that staking property on the issue of a game is an employment of that property to any purpose which God will pronounce to be useful. In *his* sight, therefore, no man can lawfully employ his property in this manner. Of course both parties in thus staking their money are guilty of sin: while each also invites and seduces the other to sin.

Fourthly. *Every man is plainly bound to devote his property to that purpose which, all things considered, appears to be the best of those which are within his reach.*

By this I do not mean that which is best in the abstract; but best for *him*, in the sphere of action allotted to him by his Maker. In other words, every man is bound to do with his property, as well as his other talents, the most good in his power. I am well aware, that this subject cannot be mathematically estimated; that in many cases the mind of a wise and good man may be at a loss to determine; and that the determination must be left to personal discretion. But in the present case there can be neither difficulty nor doubt. No man will pretend, that losing his money to a

gamester is disposing of it in such a manner as to promote the best purpose in his power. If he needs it himself, it will be more useful to him to keep it still in his possession. If he does not need it, it will be incomparably better to give it to those who do. To impart it thus to a gamester, always a vicious man, often a profligate, and always a squanderer; a man known to employ his money for sinful purposes only, can never be useful, nor even vindicable in any sense. The proof of this is complete. No man ever thought of making a gamester, *as such*, an object of almsgiving. To other prodigals, to idlers, and even to drunkards, alms at times are given. But the most enlarged charity never dreamed of finding a proper object of its bounty in a gamester. To stake money in this manner therefore, is so far from employing it in the best manner which is in the owner's power, that it is employing it in a manner indefensible, and in every respect sinful.

From these considerations it is plain, that this argument in favour of gaming, cannot avail to the purpose for which it is adduced. On the contrary, it only contributes to exhibit the sinfulness of gaming in a new light.

It often happens, and almost always in the beginning of this practice, that the gamesters are youths; and that the property which they stake belongs to their parents. This property is never intrusted to childen for the purpose of gaming. *They* receive, and *their parents* communicate, it for some valuable end; in which the promotion of their comfort and welfare was concerned. In receiving it, the children engaged, either expressly or implicitly, to use it for this end. In staking it therefore at the gaming-table, the child is guilty of a gross breach of good faith; and literally robs his parents of their property. And *he*, says Solomon, *who robbeth his father or his mother, and saith it is no sin, is the fit companion of a murderer.**

2. *The gamester ruins multitudes of his fellow-men, and injures deeply multitudes more.*

By this I intend, that he plunders them of their property and reduces them to beggary. The whole history of gaming is a mere record of this ruin. It is also completely

* Prov. xxviii. 24. (Hodgson.)

evinced by daily observation. The bankruptcies, continually brought upon mankind in this manner, are innumerable; particularly upon the young, the ignorant, the thoughtless, and the giddy. He who can coolly sit down to the ruin, or even to the serious injury, of one of his fellow-men, is an arrant villain; equally destitute of common good-will and common honesty.

3. *The gamester corrupts others by his example; and thus entails upon them moral ruin.*

*One sinner,* saith the wise man, *destroyeth much good.* In no manner is this terrible mischief accomplished so extensively and so effectually as by an evil example. Gamesters are always wicked men, totally destitute of principle, and sunk far below the common level of corruption. To this degree of turpitude every gamester reduces all those who become his companions. The ruin here accomplished, is infinitely more dreadful than that mentioned under the preceding head. It is the endless ruin of the soul; the destruction of every enjoyment and every hope. All other injuries compared with it are *nothing, and less than nothing.* With the guilt of accomplishing this stupendous evil, the gamester is wholly chargeable; and for this guilt he will be compelled to answer at the final day. What sober man, nay, what profligate, would not tremble at the thought of assuming this responsibility? But the gamester coolly and quietly makes himself answerable, not for the ruin of one soul, but of multitudes.

4. *The gamester ruins his family.*

The gamester voluntarily and causelessly exposes himself to beggary. In this conduct he sets afloat, without any security, and against every rational hope, the property on which his wife and children are to be supported, and by which his children are to be educated and settled for life. Almost every gamester is ruined by play. By this disaster both the comforts and the hopes of his family are destroyed; their spirits are broken and lost; and all their efforts to gain character and subsistence prevented. But *if any man provide not for his own, especially those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* What then shall be said of the man who squanders in this useless and guilty manner all that himself or

his ancestors have provided? To the mere lust of gaming he sacrifices the property, on which his family might subsist with comfort and reputation, by which they might be educated to usefulness and honour, and by which they might be settled advantageously in life. To this lust, therefore, he sacrifices their subsistence, their hopes, their all.

In the mean time he performs few or none of the great duties of a parent. He does not instruct: he does not govern: he cannot reprove: he cannot pray *with* his children: he cannot pray *for* them.

His example is only pernicious. He keeps the worst hours; frequents the worst places; attaches himself to the worst company; and thus, taking his children by the hand, conducts them to the same certain means of destruction.

His character therefore, contemptible and odious in itself, must be seen by them to be contemptible. Instead of the privilege and blessing always enjoined in beholding a worthy, pious, and venerable father, they suffer the deplorable calamity of seeing him, who stands in this affecting relation, a curse to themselves and a nuisance to mankind.

II. *I shall now consider those evils of gaming which immediately respect ourselves.*

These evils are very numerous, as well as very important. The

1st, *Which I shall mention is, that it is a waste of time.*

The only light in which gaming is commonly regarded as justifiable, is that of *amusement*. Amusements mankind certainly need; and what they need is lawful. But gaming is not rendered lawful by this consideration.

Every lawful amusement is of such a nature as to refresh and invigorate either the body or the mind. But gaming does neither. That it does not refresh the body, is too obvious to demand either proof or assertion. Equally certain is it, that it does not refresh nor invigorate the mind. It furnishes no valuable information: it adds no strength to the reasoning powers. So far as it has influence at all, it wearies the intellectual faculties; and is attended with all the fatigue, but with no part of the benefit, which is experienced in severe study.

It neither sweetens nor enlivens the temper. On the contrary, it is a grave, dull, spiritless employment; at which almost all persons lose their cheerfulness, and impair their native sweetness of disposition; in which the temper is soured; and in which gloom and moroseness, and frequently envy and malice, are not only created, but strengthened into immoveable habits. Gamesters, I know, herd together: but it is without good-will or social feelings; and merely because gaming makes it necessary. Their minds are engrossed, but not invigorated. Their time is ardently and anxiously, but not cheerfully, employed. They flock to the gaming-table just as the hermit and the thief return to their respective employments; because habit has made these employments necessary to them; although the hermit, if he would make the experiment, would be happier in society; and the thief, as an honest man.

All the real pleasure found in gaming, except that which arises from the love of sin, is found in the acquisition of money; or the pride of victory; and the superior skill or the fortunate chance from which it is derived. All these are base and sordid sources of pleasure. Gaming then is not a useful, and of course not a justifiable, amusement.

In the mean while all the time employed in it is wasted and lost. This loss is immense. No man can answer for it to his Maker; no man can repair the injury which is done to himself. It cannot be too often said, nor too strongly realized, that time is the most valuable of all things; since on the proper employment of it depends every blessing which we are capable of receiving. He who wastes it, as every gamester does, is guilty of a prodigality which cannot be estimated. All men are bound by the most solemn obligations to *redeem their time;* that is, to make the most profitable use of every day. But gaming is profitable for nothing. For if it is useless as an amusement, it is absolutely useless.

2. *Gaming is a wanton waste of our faculties and privileges.*

Every faculty and every privilege was given to us only, that we might promote the glory of God, and the real good of ourselves and our fellow-men. From labouring always to these ends, there is no exemption, and no excuse.

*Whether ye eat, or drink,* saith St. Paul, *or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. To him who, by a patient continuance in well-doing, seeks for glory, honour, and immortality,* and to him only, is promised *eternal life.* Our faculties are, our understanding, our affections, and our energy. Our privileges are the means of education, knowledge, virtue, usefulness, and enjoyment. But none of our faculties are benefited by gaming. The understanding is not enlarged; the affections are not improved; the energy is not invigorated: while all these privileges are, at the same time, abused, and thrown away. How great a waste of what mighty blessings is here! How entire a frustration of the end of our being! With a due improvement of his faculties and privileges, every man may become wise and virtuous. How incalculable is the difference between such a man and a gamester!

A glorious privilege, the result of all those which have been mentioned, is *that of doing our duty.* But gaming is in itself, and in its consequences, an entire omission of all duty. With industry and economy, the whole life of a gamester is at war. His prime employment cherishes, unceasingly, gross appetites, and gross passions; and forces him to be a stranger to *self-government.* Into the heart of a man, engrossed by schemes of acquiring the property of his neighbour by the throwing of dice and the shuffling of cards, it is impossible that *benevolence* should enter. In acts of *beneficence,* hands, which have so long been made the instruments of covetousness and plunder, can never be employed.

No gamester was ever a man of *piety,* so long as he was a gamester.

Of no gamester can it be said, *Behold he prayeth!* The very first step towards the assumption of this character must be deep repentance for his gross and guilty life, accompanied by an entire self-abhorrence, and followed by a vigorous reformation.

3. *Gaming is a wanton and wicked waste of property.*

The end for which our property was given is the same to which our faculties and privileges are destined. To this end, to some purpose really acceptable to God, and really useful to ourselves and others, it can always be applied.

There never was a situation in which, there never was a man by whom, all his property could not be devoted to some useful purpose within his reach. But squandering money at the gaming-table is of no use, either to the loser or to the winner. If the loser has common sense, he can take no pleasure in his losses. If the winner has common honesty, he can take no pleasure in his gains. Beside the suffering involved in his immediate losses, the loser forms a pernicious habit of undervaluing property; and cuts himself off both from doing and enjoying that good which the property lost might have procured. Nor is the winner more happily affected. From winning often, especially when in straitened circumstances, he soon acquires full confidence that he should win whenever it is necessary. Hence he expends what he has gained on objects of no value. "*Male parta male dilabuntur*" is probably a maxim in every nation; and is verified by all human experience.

With habits of this nature we cannot wonder that gamesters, such I mean as devote themselves to this employment, universally become beggars. *Wealth*, says Solomon, *gotten by vanity, is diminished:* that is, wealth acquired by vain and dishonest courses of life. *Drowsiness*, says the same profound observer of human life and manners, *will clothe a man with rags. Drowsiness* here intends, that course of conduct which, in opposition to the steady energy and vigorous efforts of industry, aims at obtaining a subsistence by dishonest and low-minded arts. Such were the facts three thousand years ago. Such are the facts at the present hour. In the whole list of jockeys and sharpers it is rare, in this and probably in all other countries, that we find a man possessed of even moderate property. Those who are most successful, acquire such habits of expense, such expectations of supplying their wants by playing at any time, and consequently such a contempt for economy and even for common prudence, that they become poor of course. The old age of a gamester, is the cold and comfortless evening of a forlorn and miserable day.

4. *Gaming is the destruction of character.*

*A good name*, says Solomon, *is better than great riches, and loving favour, than silver and gold.* A fair, unblemished reputation is one of the ch ef blessings of man;

one of his prime enjoyments; one of his principal means of usefulness. Without it, he can obtain neither influence nor confidence; neither profitable employments nor real friends. But no gamester was ever respected *as such.* Whatever talents or advantages he may otherwise have possessed, his character has been always sunk by his gaming. Look around the world, and judge for yourselves. You never knew, and therefore never will know, a gamester, who, in this character, was regarded by his neighbours with esteem. Common sense steadily attaches disgrace to the name. So conscious of this fact are the whole class of gamesters, that they usually take effectual pains to carry on their wretched employment in scenes of solitude and secrecy, where they are effectually hidden from the eyes of mankind.

But who that possesses common sobriety, or even sanity of mind; who, that is not a fair candidate for bedlam; would voluntarily destroy the blessing of his own good name? The *slanderer,* who blasts the reputation of another, is universally and justly regarded with abhorrence. What the slanderer does for another, the gamester does for himself. The slanderer is a vile and abominable wretch. In what respect is the gamester less vile and abominable? The slanderer is an assassin: the gamester is a suicide.

5. *Gaming is the direct road to many other sins.*

Every gamester, with too few exceptions to deserve notice, becomes a sharper of course. High expectations of acquiring property suddenly, distressing disappointments, great gains, and great losses, instantaneously experienced, strong hopes alternated with strong fears, and holding the mind habitually in a state of anxious suspense, regularly prove too powerful for the honesty of every man who has not too much virtue to be a gamester. By what is called *fair play* he fails of being successful. A series of ill success tempts him to play *unfairly.* Ultimately he is charged with it. He denies it; and is thus guilty of falsehood. The charge is reiterated. He swears to the truth of his denial; and is thus guilty of perjury. His oath is doubted. He becomes angry, profane, and [illegible]; and not unfrequently engages in a quarrel to vindicate his wounded honour. At times the dispute is [illegible] by

a duel. In all ordinary circumstances, his affections become sour, and his mind envious at the success of his companions, and malicious towards their persons. At the same time he is prompted to murmur at his ill-success; to curse what he calls his luck, but what is in truth a dispensation of God: and to adopt a course of profane, blasphemous, and fiend-like language. To close this wretched detail; the gamester very often terminates his miserable career with drunkenness, and not unfrequently with self-murder. Who, that is not lost to every hope of virtue; who, that is not lost to common sense and common feeling; can be willing to thrust himself into a course of life, or into the entrance upon a course of life, which presents at the very gate most formidable temptations to these enormous sins? Who would be willing that a father, a husband, a brother, or a son, should be guilty of these sins, or exposed to these temptations? This question will probably never be answered. Will it then be said, that men are found who love these relations better than themselves? It will not be said. But it must be said, because it is true, that multitudes of men resort to the gaming-table with an infantine giddiness of mind; a hare-brained spirit of adventure; a greedy avarice; and a treacherous confidence in their own watchfulness against temptations; in that prudent care, which, always seen with microscopic eyes, they considered as abundantly sufficient to secure themselves from every danger. Thus, while *the* really *prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself*, these *simple*, self-deceived beings *pass on, and are punished.*

From these considerations it is, if I mistake not, evident beyond debate, that gaming is a gross fraud; that in many other points of view, it is an enormous sin: and that it is, in an alarming degree, fatal to all the real interests of man. There are, however, persons who, because they escape some of the dangers, and avoid some of the iniquities, connected with this practice, will flatter themselves that they are scarcely chargeable with the rest. They may not claim the character of virtue; but they will insist that their conduct is almost, if not entirely, innocent; and will at least believe themselves, if guilty at all, to be guilty only

in a very minute degree. To these persons let me seriously address the following considerations.

In the first place. *Gaming is an appearance of evil.*

*Abstain from all appearance of evil,* is a command of the same God who said, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart;* and is therefore armed with the same authority. But every person of piety, and almost every sober man, pronounces gaming *to be an evil.* It cannot, therefore, be denied to be *an appearance of evil.* By the arguments here advanced it has been shewn, unless I am deceived, to be a real and dreadful evil. That every man, therefore, is bound to abstain from it cannot be questioned.

Secondly. *Every gamester feels it to be an evil.*

In all the early parts of his addiction to this course of life, he will find himself frequently employed, if he has any moral principles at all, in devising arguments and excuses to quiet his own conscience and justify himself to others. This is not the conduct of a man who feels himself innocent. No person ever sought an excuse for prayer; for honest industry; for the pious education of children; or for a faithful attendance on the public worship of God. Most persons at the gaming-table are sensibly disturbed by the unexpected presence of a wise and good man. But such persons create no disturbance in the minds of those who believe themselves to be virtuously employed. Were the Redeemer of mankind again upon earth; no person, who acknowledged his character, would be willing to be found by him at a gaming-table.

Thirdly. *Gaming cannot be prayed for.*

Nothing can be right or innocent for which we cannot pray. In all pursuits which he believes to be justifiable, every man can without difficulty ask for the blessing of God. But no man ever asked, no man ever will ask; that is, seriously and solemnly, or in other words really; for the blessing of God upon the employment of gaming. But that which cannot be prayed for is sinful.

Fourthly. *Neither gaming, nor the circumstances which regularly attend it, can be recited at the day of judgment.*

I call upon every gamester solemnly to consider, whether he will be able to come before *the Judge of the quick*

*and the dead*, and declare to him with confidence, or even with hope, that he has spent life, or any part of it, in the business of gaming. But the conduct which cannot be rehearsed then, cannot be right now. Who can soberly approve in this world of that which will condemn him in the world to come?

There are many persons who condemn what is called *gambling*, or *gaming for money*, and who yet appear to think themselves justified in *gaming for mere amusement*. Let me exhort all such persons to remember, that, whatever influence this conduct may have upon themselves, *it will, as an example, be pernicious to others*. Multitudes will know that they game, who will never know that they do not game for money. Multitudes also will be either unable, or uninclined, to make any serious distinction between these kinds of conduct. All these will directly plead the example as a justification of themselves, or at least as a palliation of their own guilt. This will peculiarly be the fact where the persons concerned are persons of reputation: and, unfortunately, a considerable number of those who employ themselves in gaming for amusement, are of this character. The example of one such person will be pleaded by all who know it. Under the wing of one such man, a multitude of gamblers, almost all of whom are without reputation, and great numbers low, contemptible beings, will gather; and feel themselves brooded in safety and secured from the dreaded intrusions of public censure. Were gambling unfurnished with reputable and fashionable examples, it would, I think, be easily exterminated from the world. Every person, possessed of a generally fair character, may therefore feel assured, that, if he games for amusement, he is one of the means, and not a small one, of keeping gambling alive among mankind; and that he contributes efficaciously to the existence of all the sin and all the misery which it will produce at future periods.

To these observations it will probably be replied, "*Must I deny myself an innocent pleasure, because my neighbour is pleased to make a bad use of my example?*" St. Paul has long since answered this question. *For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to*

*eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.* Rom. xiv. 20, 21. And again, 1 Cor. viii. 13, *Wherefore if meat make my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.* However innocent gaming for amusement may be, it cannot be more innocent than *eating flesh*, than doing that which the apostle has pronounced *pure*. Yet the apostle, and God who inspired him, have declared, that whatever occasions our brother to stumble or fall into sin, it is good not to do, however innocent it may be otherwise; and the apostle has declared, that he would not do this, even though *eating flesh*, so innocent, so directly allowed by God, and so important as food for man, were the thing in question, no, *not while the world standeth.* Nay, he has farther declared in the verse preceding that last quoted, that when in such cases *we wound the weak conscience of our brother, we sin against Christ.* All this he declares concerning eating flesh, and concerning every other innocent thing. If then *our gaming for amusement* be what it cannot fail to be, *accuse of inducing others to game for money,* to become gamesters, and to fall into any or all of these sins; then in gaming for amusement we sin against Christ by wounding the conscience of our weaker brethren, and becoming the direct means of tempting them to sin.

The supposition here made is however false. Gaming for amusement, *in such as are either partially or wholly games of chance, particularly with cards and dice,* is not and cannot be innocent. It is almost of course a sinful waste of time. As an amusement, it is unnecessary and useless. It refreshes neither the mind nor the body; and fails therefore essentially of being a lawful amusement. Better amusements can always be substituted for it; particularly *exercise, reading,* and *conversation;* and among amusements, as well as among employments, we are bound to select the best in our power. The controversy, the hope of victory, the reluctance to be vanquished, and, universally, that continual state of suspense and anxiety, always experienced in gaming; have, although in a less degree, substantially the same influence on the mind, and are furnished with the same temptations which are found in gam-

ing for money. In addition to these things, gaming for money is almost always the consequence of an addiction to gaming for amusement. The expectation that we shall be able to withstand the allurements by which others have fallen, is a mere and ruinous presumption; the presumption of *a man wise in his own conceit;* of whom *there is less hope* than *of a fool.* The probabilities that we shall fall where so many have fallen, are millions to one; and the contrary opinion is only a dream of lunacy. At the same time, no man can stand up in his closet, before his Maker, and thank him for the privilege of gaming to-day, or ask his blessing to enable him to game to-morrow.

But the influence of example is abundantly sufficient to prove the sinfulness of gaming for amusement. Call to mind the extent to which this evil has spread. Think what amazing multitudes have been corrupted, distressed, and ruined, by it for this world, and that which is to come. Think how many families have been plunged by it in beggary, and overwhelmed by it in vice. Think how many persons have become liars at the gaming table; how many perjured; how many drunkards; how many blasphemers; how many suicides. "*If Europe,*" said Montesquieu, "*is to be ruined, it will be ruined by gaming.*" Remember, that unless persons of reputation gamed for amusement, persons without reputation would soon cease to game for money. Then call to mind, that *your* example is one of the means which produce all these evils, and continue the practice, together with its miserable consequences in the world. Remember that you set the snare, spread the corruption, and effectuate the ruin; that you help to fill the world with wretchedness and sin, and both allure and lead your fellow-men to final perdition. With these plain and solemn truths in full view, look up to God; and, if you can, declare, that there is no sin in gaming for amusement.

# SERMON CXXV.

## NINTH COMMANDMENT.

### THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF TRUTH AND VERACITY.

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*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*
EXOD. XX. 16.

THE preceding command was intended to secure *justice* to mankind: this was intended to establish *truth*.

The word *truth* denotes, among other things,

1. *Such declarations as are accordant with the real state of things:*

2. *That division of truth which is called moral, or evangelical:*

3. *Veracity, or a disposition to speak truth:*

4. *Faithfulness, or a disposition to fulfil, exactly, promises, trusts, and covenants.*

Under this command are properly ranged the following subjects.

I. *Truth;*

II. *Lying;*

III. *Perjury;* and,

IV. *Slander.*

These I propose to consider in the order specified.

The first of them, viz. *truth*, shall occupy the present discourse. In examining it, it is my design to consider *the nature and importance of truth, and the importance of veracity.*

Concerning the former of these subjects I observe,

1. *That truth is an account of the real state of things.*

*Mathematical truth* is an account of the real state of number and quantity, together with their various relations; *philosophical truth*, understood in the natural sense, of material bodies and their operations; and *moral truth*, of

intelligent beings, their relations, their duties, and their actions.

The real state of things is that with which only we have any concern; and with this our concern is infinite. In the present world, so far as the present world only is concerned, our whole interest is involved in the real state of ourselves, our business, and the subjects of it; our families, our country, and mankind. The collection of truths which we receive concerning these and other subjects, is what is called *knowledge;* our guide to all that conduct which may be useful to us, and our security against that which may be noxious. The truth that bread is wholesome food, enables us to eat it with safety. A falsehood in this case might lead us to swallow poison. A knowledge of the true state of our farms, and of agriculture, enables us to cultivate our farms with profit. A knowledge of the real state of the markets, enables us to trade with safety and success. A knowledge of the real characters of men, enables us to choose those who will be our real friends; and secures us from inviting to our friendship base and treacherous men. Misapprehension in these respects, would ruin both our business and ourselves.

In the moral world, the truth concerning God, his pleasure, ourselves, the relation which we sustain to him and to each other, and the duties springing from these relations, enables us to obey him; to become blessings to each other; and to obtain the blessings of immortality. Falsehood, in these respects, would lead us infinitely astray. False apprehensions of God have led a great part of mankind to worship devils, men, beasts, trees, stocks, and stones; to mistake sin for virtue, and ruin for safety. No man ever dreamed that his interests lay in the regions of *fiction*, or that his sober correspondence should be carried on with fairies and genii. But the man who embraces falsehood, and is governed by it, places his interests, so far, in a world equally visionary; and corresponds not with real beings, but with creatures of fancy. As happiness can never come to us from the regions of fiction, or their imaginary inhabitants; so happiness never sprang, and never will spring, from false views of the real world, and its real inhabitants. Our only connexion with these objects is

through the medium of truth, or the knowledge of their real state.

2. *Truth is in itself a rich source of enjoyment.*

By this I intend, that it is an object immediately enjoyed; and that, when presented to the mind, it communicates pleasure of course.

*Fiction* may be, in this sense, and I acknowledge often is, a source of real enjoyment to the mind. God, to raise our views to a better world than that which has been ruined by our apostacy, and to awaken in us desires for a nobler happiness than any which this world supplies, has made us capable of forming many delightful objects in our imagination; many which are beautiful; many which are sublime; and many which are wonderful. On these the mind rests with pleasure during short periods; especially in youth; and, so long as they are regarded as objects of imagination merely, they are sources of pleasure, which may be really enjoyed, and to a considerable extent. But when any fiction is changed into a falsehood; when it ceases to be an object of the imagination, and becomes an object of belief; it is always, sooner or later, a source of suffering, and not of enjoyment. Even in the character of fiction, it gradually loses its power to please. As we advance in years, the love of truth, considered as a source of pleasure merely, takes its place; and the mind seeks for enjoyment in knowledge, and not in the exercises of imagination.

But truth is always capable of yielding more delight to the mind than fiction: or, in other words, intellectual enjoyment is always capable of being superior to that which flows in by the fancy. The actual state of things which God has made, is, in every respect, more beautiful, glorious, and desirable, than any which the mind can imagine. Every person who understands the modes in which the mind is actively employed in forming complex ideas, whether of the intellect or the imagination, knows that all such ideas are made out of those which it receives from objects really existing. These it can compound and compare; but can add to them nothing but what it has already perceived. New beauty, new sublimity, new loveliness, it can form, only by bringing together, in new unions, the perception of beauty, sublimity, and loveliness which it

has derived either from the actual state of things, or from revelation. In the objects formed by the fancy, therefore, there can be nothing, in degree, more sublime, beautiful, or lovely, than that which it has already received. In conformity with these observations, no object was ever described by the pen of man, so as to make the impression of sublimity equally with the object itself. No images in human writings were ever so sublime as those of inspiration. No character, formed by the imagination, was ever to be compared with that of Christ.

When I speak of the actual state of things which God has made, as in every respect more beautiful, glorious, and desirable, than any which the mind can imagine, I mean the whole state of things. The universe is a single system. Every thing belonging to it is a necessary and proper part of the system: such a part, as Infinite Wisdom thought it best to make: and, therefore, such as was more desirable than any thing else in its place. The whole taken together is a perfect system: the result of the perfect views of the All-Perfect Mind. In such a sense is it perfect, that it is truly said, *Jehovah shall rejoice in his works;* that is because all, united, are such as to accomplish to the utmost the good pleasure of his boundless wisdom. The truth concerning this system, or the knowledge of its real state, will for ever delight, as well as enlarge, the minds of virtuous and immortal beings.

In the present world, imperfect, prejudiced, and narrow, as our minds are, the exhibitions of truth concerning this subject in the Scriptures, are not only superior to every thing conceived by the human imagination, but more delightful to every virtuous being; more delightful beyond comparison, as well as superior beyond degree. The character of God; the mediation of the Redeemer; the agency of the divine Spirit; the dispensations of infinite mercy; the restoration of sinners to virtue and happiness; the consummation of all things; the blessings of immortality; the glory of heaven: and the future union of sanctified minds in that delightful world; leave out of sight, and out of remembrance, all the creations of poetry; all the splendid excursions of imagination. *Into these things angels desire to look.* All those whose minds are attuned to the disposition

of angels, love to follow them in this divine employment. Nay, God himself regards this combination of wonderful objects as a glorious picture, an illustrious emanation of his own wisdom, which he beholds for ever with the smiles of infinite complacency.

3. *That great division of truth which is called moral or evangelical truth, is, in an important sense, the foundation of all virtue.*

*Sanctify them through thy truth! thy word is truth:* said our Saviour, in his intercessory prayer, John xvii. 17. *Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth,* James i. 17. *The truth,* said Christ to the Jews, *shall make you free.* From these declarations it is completely evident, that evangelical truth is the means of that mighty change in the human soul, by which according to the strong language of the Scriptures, it is *turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.*

*The law of the Lord,* says David, *is perfect, converting the soul.* But the law of God is nothing but truth, communicated in the preceptive form. All its influence on the soul is derived from this fact: and where it not conformed to truth, or were in other words founded on falsehood, its moral influence would cease. Particularly its influence to produce this conversion would be annihilated. Truth then is, in this point of view, of just as much importance to the happiness of mankind, and to the glory of God, as the salvation of all the millions who have been or will be saved.

Falsehood or error has, in the mean time, never had the least influence towards the accomplishment of this glorious purpose. From the erroneous moral systems of men, no individual ever gained the least tendency towards real virtue. Truths indeed these systems have always involved: and the influence of these truths has so far been felt by mankind, as to prompt them to many commendable actions, and to prevent them from becoming as abandoned as they would otherwise have been. The errors which they contained have, so far as they were believed, been the means of sin only. Of cordial and thorough reformation they have been absolutely barren. Truth and falsehood have been blended in them with such confusion, as to [illegible] in-

separable by the men who embraced them without very different efforts from those which they have been inclined, and in most cases able to make. They have therefore been swallowed whole; and have produced just such effects, as a mind enlightened by revelation could not fail to foresee. Error became the predominating rule of action to all their votaries; and the truth was chiefly lost and forgotten.

But moral truth is not merely a rule to teach us what virtue is, and to guide us ultimately to this glorious attainment. To discern it with understanding, and to welcome it to the heart, is virtue itself, as existing in the soul; and when carried out into action, conformed also to its dictates, is all which is included in the name of virtue. In other words, *virtue is nothing but voluntary obedience to truth.*

Error, on the contrary, is the foundation of all iniquity. It leads the soul only away from duty, from virtue, from salvation, and from God. To the divine kingdom it is only hostile. To the reformation and happiness of man it is ruinous. It promotes no cause but that of Satan: it forms no character but that of sin. All the just definitions of sin are involved in this; that *it is nothing but voluntary obedience to error.*

In the mean time all *the motives to virtue* are found in the general system of truth: as all the motives to sin are found in systems of error. Error contains nothing in it, to prompt us to obey God, to perform our duty or to seek the salvation of ourselves and others. As a motive, or combination of motives, error contains nothing but inducements to sin; and truth nothing but inducements to holiness. In all these important particulars truth is the basis of virtue.

It cannot be thought strange, then, that *love* or evangelical excellence, or, in other words, real virtue, should *rejoice in the truth;* that holiness should be styled by St. Paul, *holiness of truth;* or that *those who know not God,* and *obey not the gospel,* or truth *of our Lord Jesus Christ,* should be classed together in the ruin of the final day.

By these views of the importance of truth, we are naturally led to the second subject of discourse, viz. *veracity.*

*The importance of veracity* will sufficiently appear from the following considerations.

1. *Almost all the truth which we know we derive from communication; and of course almost all the benefits of truth which we enjoy.*

A man deprived of the communication of others, and left wholly to his own observation, would possess little more knowledge than a brute. It would be no easy matter to explain how he could subsist. If we suppose him to subsist through the ordinary period of human life; it is certain that he would know nothing beside his own feelings; and the little number of objects which fell under his observation. Even of these he would rather form ideas than possess knowledge. Of the relations between them he must remain almost absolutely ignorant. Nor would he easily acquire the skill necessary to construct even the simplest propositions. Still less would he be able to reason, to illustrate, and to prove. In a word, his mind would rise in very few things above that of a dog or an elephant; while in almost all he would fall far below them.

As he would know scarcely any thing concerningthe present world; so it is plain he would know nothing of the world to come. Of God, of duty, of virtue, and of immortality, he would not form a single idea. Nor could he, without manifest impropriety, be styled a rational being. How could such a man enjoy the benefits of truth at all?

The difference between this man, as an intelligent being, and Newton, Berkeley, or Locke, is made by *communication*. The mass of ideas accumulated by an individual, is communicated to others; and those of a preceding generation, to the generation which follows. By the labours of many individuals, and in the progress of successive generations, the knowledge formed out of these ideas has increased to that height and extent which exists in the present period. Every kind of business, art, and science, has been thus brought to the perfection in which *we* possess it; and all the benefits which these things confer upon the present race of mankind, are derived solely from communication. For our knowledge of the future world, we are indebted wholly to communications from God. To the same source we are indebted for the chief knowledge which we possess concerning the moral system. All this knowledge is indeed contained in the Scriptures: yet a part of it may be and

has been acquired without their assistance. To this knowledge we are indebted for the direction, comfort, and hope, which we enjoy in the character of moral beings; as we are to natural knowledge for the necessaries and conveniences of the present life. To communication, therefore, we owe almost every thing, whether present or future, which can be called desirable.

But the whole value, the whole usefulness, of communication, is derived solely from the truths which it conveys. False information can be of no use to us. As our own concern lies with the real state of things; and the good or evil which we are to enjoy or suffer, is dependant on our knowledge of that state, and the conduct dictated by this knowledge; it is evident that the information which leads us to conceive erroneously of the things with which we are connected, will both hinder us from the acquisition of good, and expose us to the sufferance of evil. The measures by which we design to acquire good and to avoid evil, will in both cases fail of their effect; because, being founded on erroneous apprehensions, they will be unsuited to the existing state of things, and therefore to the accomplishment of the intended purpose. If we are falsely informed of business, we shall conduct it unhappily; if of the markets, we shall buy and sell with loss; if of our duty, we shall perform it amiss, or not at all; if of the means of salvation, we shall fail of it; if of the character and pleasure of God, we shall offend him in all our attempted services. Thus it is plain that all the benefits of communication are dependant on its truth, and that almost every benefit of truth experienced by rational beings, is derived from their mutual veracity.

2. *Veracity is the only foundation of confidence.*

Confidence is the great bond of society among *intelligent* beings. Intelligent creatures are *supremely* dependant on their Creator, and *to a vast extent* on each other. From him ultimately they derive all the good which they enjoy: and without his perpetual protection and blessing they must not only be miserable but must perish. A great part of these blessings he has been pleased to communicate to us through the instrumentality and agency of his rational creatures. To them immediately we are indebted for blessings innumerable in their multitude, incalculable in

their importance, and indispensable to our daily safety, peace, and comfort, and not unfrequently to the continuance of our lives. So numerous and so continual are these blessings, that they are generally regarded as things of course; and pass by us unnoticed and unseen.

Originally all these blessings are unpossessed by us: all of them from time to time being future. It is necessary therefore, that we should provide for the acquisition of them by such means as are in our power. As for almost all of them we must be indebted to the agency of others, we are compelled unavoidably to rely on their engagements to supply them. Here the field opens in which confidence is to be exercised; and almost at our very entrance into life it becomes boundless. We are obliged to trust to parents and others for protection, food, raiment, and innumerable other things indispensable to our subsistence, as well as our comfort, from infancy to manhood. The offices for which we rely, are necessary, and are rendered; the benefits are indispensable, and are communicated; every day, hour, and moment. Confidence is thus diffused every where, and at all times. We trust as naturally and unceasingly as we breathe; and with as little consciousness of the fact. In the same manner is the same confidence extended through life; exercised every moment; placed in a greater or less degree on every person with whom we correspond; and employed about every object with which we have any concern. If we could not confide, we should in a sense know nothing, acquire nothing, and do nothing, to any valuable purpose.

Equally indebted are we to confidence for almost the whole of our happiness. The emotion is delightful in itself, and indispensable to every other delightful emotion. It is equally pleasant to trust and to be trusted. No supposable union of esteem and good-will is more pleasing, more elevated, or more refined. Accordingly it is thus regarded by those who exercise it, and by those towards whom it is exercised. Parents are never more delighted than in the entire confidence of their children. Children are never more happy, than when they entirely confide in their parents.

Equally necessary is confidence to the existence and op-

rations of government. Indeed government without it would be a nullity. Even the despot himself must rely on a numerous train of agents for the accomplishment of his purposes. Without their co-operation he could do nothing towards the control of his subjects, beyond what he could accomplish by his own physical strength. Accordingly he is always compelled to buy the assistance of such agents with extensive gratuities of wealth and honour, as well as to force it by terror.

Virtuous rulers who govern a free people by laws and by influence, stand only on the mutual confidence of themselves and their subjects. Withdraw this confidence, and the government is annihilated at once. The rulers become powerless, and the society is lost in anarchy.

A state of absolute distrust is a state of absolute misery. Like the cold hand of death, distrust would dissolve the whole frame and texture of the social body; the joints and the ligaments, the energy and the life. A country could no longer contain its inhabitants, nor even the den its banditti. Such a state of things in this world has hitherto never existed in the absolute sense.

Without confidence God himself would cease to be the moral governor of intelligent creatures. As I have elsewhere considered this subject, it will be the less necessary to insist upon it here. Still a few observations concerning it cannot be improper.

It is clear even to a very limited and obtuse apprehension, that without confidence in a ruler, voluntary obedience can never exist; that without voluntary obedience God can never be pleased with his intelligent creatures; since no other can be honourable to him; and that without the same obedience, those creatures can never be amiable in his sight; since no other can render them virtuous. Distrust is an absolute separation of those beings in whom it exists, from those towards whom it is exercised. A being distrusted can never be loved, reverenced, nor voluntarily obeyed. Of such obedience confidence is the commencement, the soul, and the substance. But where there is no truth in the ruler, there can be no confidence in the subject. However great, however knowing, the divine Ruler might be

supposed or perceived to be; his greatness and knowledge would, unless accompanied by veracity, only inspire suspense and terror; suspense and terror pervading the intelligent universe, distracting every heart, and filling every world with agitation and anguish. Omnipotence would indeed enable him to compel an external conformity to his pleasure; but the obedience rendered would be the obedience of slaves, and not of children. It is a plain moral impossibility, that a being without veracity should be respected or loved. However great and splendid an earthly ruler may be; however successful in his designs; however magnificent in his mode of living; however distinguished for his talents; and however liberal in his largesses; he would, if a liar, be a base and contemptible being. Falsehood in an infinite Being would render him infinitely contemptible. Even the benevolence of the gospel, without truth (if it were possible to separate them), would be changed into a kind of amiable weakness, a silly wavering good-nature, and would cease to command respect.

A ruler without truth could offer no motives to his subjects which could induce them to obey. Should he enact laws, promise rewards, and threaten penalties; it would be very uncertain whether the law prescribe the conduct which would be agreeable to him; whether the rewards would be given to such as faithfully obeyed; or whether the penalties would be inflicted on such as disobeyed. Whatever he promised; whatever he threatened; no reliance could be placed on his declarations; and they could therefore hold out no motives to obedience. But a moral government is a government operating by motives, and without motives cannot exist.

Thus it is completely evident, that the kingdom of God or his government of the intelligent universe, rests upon truth as its foundation.

3. *Veracity is the source of inestimable personal good.*

*Veracity is the first constituent of an honourable, and even of a fair, reputation.* A bad man who is known always to speak truth, will always command a considerable share of respect; but a liar is despised of course. So contemptible is falsehood, that to charge any man with this vice, is universally regarded as the least affront which scorn and

ill-nature are able to offer; as an injury for which an atonement can scarcely be made.

*Without veracity, virtue*, as has been heretofore remarked, *can in no sense exist*. To the existence of virtue then in our own minds, veracity is indispensable.

*Equally indispensable is it to self-approbation.* Conscience like God always delights in truth; and always approves of speaking truth. This approbation it faithfully and invariably whispers to the soul. Few enjoyments can be compared with self-approbation. It is delightful; it is full of peace, comfort, and hope; it is independent of time and accident, of friends and enemies. *The world cannot give* it: the world cannot *take* it *away*.

Conscience on the other hand abhors a lie, and solemnly and dreadfully reproaches the liar. Wherever falsehood is loved and uttered, conscience pierces the soul with stings of agony; and holds up to the culprit a dreadful mirror by which all his deformity and guilt are forced upon his view. The terrible likeness he is compelled to own. At the sight of this awful image he trembles, falters, and reluctantly, but irresistibly, sinks beneath the proper level of his nature.

*Veracity is the source also of all personal dignity.* There is no dignity without consistency of character. A merely fickle, changeable man, although intentionally sincere, is at the best but a mere trifler, and can never be the subject of real respectability. Moral inconsistency is still more hostile to dignity. The subject of it is to every eye not only contemptible but odious. To himself particularly he appears of necessity base and despicable; and is forced to feel, that by his own crimes he has sunk himself below the proper character and rank of man.

*Veracity makes us like to God.* This glorious Being styles himself *a God of truth*, and declares it to be impossible that he should lie. Truth is the moral immutability of *his* character, and the moral consistency of finite intelligences. Him truth surrounds with dignity infinite: them it exalts to a resemblance of him which is divine and eternal; an image of supreme excellence and beauty.

*Veracity is no less the source of usefulness.* Men never voluntarily employ those in whom they do not place confidence. *As vinegar to the teeth and as smoke to the eyes, so*

*is the loiterer to him that sendeth him.* The fear of being deceived, the suspense and anxiety which we necessarily feel when our affairs are in the hands of unfaithful men, soon forbid a repetition of the same experiment. Equally unwilling are we in all ordinary cases to be employed by men of this character. Such men demand from us services, expect from us compliances, and propose to us terms, inconsistent both with comfort and integrity; and when our services are performed, they will usually, so far as safety will permit and their own convenience may require, defraud us of our proper reward. I know of but one exception to these remarks. Bad men do, I acknowledge, employ bad men to promote a bad cause: but even they confide useful, honourable employment only to persons of integrity. Equally necessary is this attribute to the production and establishment of that influence which constitutes a great part of the usefulness of every useful man. A liar can neither convince others nor persuade others. Others cannot engage with him in any serious, useful design: they cannot enter into his service nor employ him in theirs with safety or hope. His falsehood is a blast upon his character and upon his interests alike. He who is connected with him lives in continual fear of being betrayed, and he only who shuns him is either happy or safe.

Finally, *Veracity is indispensable to our acceptance with God.* The Psalmist, when he inquires, *Who shall ascend into the tabernacle of the Highest?* solemnly answers, *He that speaketh truth in his heart; he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.* Such is the universal language of the Scriptures. *Lying lips,* saith the wise man, *are an abomination unto the Lord. There shall in nowise enter into the city any thing that defileth, nor he that loveth and maketh a lie.* Every liar therefore knows, that he is in a state of condemnation, that hitherto he has no title to endless life, nor a single hope of final acceptance with God. Before these blessings can be begun, his ruling character must be renounced. He who *requireth truth in the inward parts,* can turn no eye but that of indignation and abhorrence, upon a soul polluted with falsehood, and instamped with the foul image of him who *was a liar from the beginning, and the father of it.* In heaven a liar would be a gazing

stock, a spot on the beautiful and glorious aspect of that happy world; a curse to himself, and a nuisance to its exalted inhabitants.

There is one world in the universe, and so far as we are informed but one, in which truth is unknown and falsehood reigns and ravages. Here *all liars have their part*, and all who dwell here are liars. Here, to deceive and to be deceived is the base employment and the wretched lot. Truth here is never spoken unless to deceive; and confidence is never exercised. Friendship, sociality, the union of hearts, and the interchange of affections, are never found in this dreary and dreadful region. In the midst of millions every individual is alone. A gloomy and terrible solitude broods over the desolate vast, and the eye of suffering and sorrow, stretching its look of anguish above, around, beneath, finds no friend in whom it may confide, no bosom on which it may repose, with comfort, peace, or hope.

How different is that delightful residence where all who love and speak truth, are by the boundless goodness of the Creator united in a divine and blissful assembly. Here truth, by every member of this vast and happy family, is loved, studied, embraced, and spoken, for ever. Confidence here enters the soul, and takes up in this unsullied mansion its eternal residence. Friendship, the twin-sister of confidence, dwells and smiles by her side, and sheds upon the purified mind her immortal enjoyments; while God with infinite complacency beholds this illustrious work of his own hands, and showers around it with eternal profusion the ever-growing blessings of his unchangeable love.

# SERMON CXXVI.

## NINTH COMMANDMENT.

### THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF LYING.

*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*—EXOD. XX. 16.

IN the preceding discourse I considered at some length *the nature* and *importance of truth and veracity*. These are the *basis* of the precept in the text. I shall now go on to examine the immediate *subject* of the text, viz. *falsehood*, under the two following heads:

I. *Lying:*

II. *Slander.*

Under the former of these heads I shall include *promise-breaking* and *perjury*.

In discoursing on this subject I propose to consider,

*The nature;*

*The causes;*

*The mischiefs;* and,

*The preventives; of lying.*

Concerning the first of these subjects, *viz.* the *nature* of lying, I observe generally, that a lie is *a false declaration of facts wilfully made, or made,* as is sometimes the case, *from indifference to truth.*

*A false promise* is a crime substantially of the same nature with *a lie in the proper sense.* A lie is *a false declaration of existing facts.* A false promise is *a false declaration of future facts.*

Perjury is *a false declaration, either of present or future facts wilfully made, accompanied by an oath. Perjury in evidence,* is a false declaration under oath of existing facts. *Perjury under an oath of office or trust,* is a false declaration of future facts. The future facts here referred to are uni-

versally such as are supposed to be under our own control; and are chiefly such as are involved in our own conduct. Such at least is the case *when the oath or promise is lawfully made.*

Mankind are guilty of lying, that is substantially guilty, in the following ways.

1. *In voluntary declarations of facts which are known to be false.*

For example; every narration known to be false, is a lie. Equally such is every description of a similar nature.

2. *In declaring that to be true which we believe to be otherwise, although in the end it should be found that the truth was really declared.*

To our minds, that is true or false which after careful examination we believe to be so. Before we make our declarations, we are bound to examine as impartially and as thoroughly as we can. After such an examination, if we declare, agreeably to the best knowledge which we are able thus to obtain, and with no more confidence than such an examination warrants, our veracity is I apprehend unimpeachable. We may indeed mistake, but are in no sense guilty of lying. But if we declare that which is contrary to our belief, although the declaration should be exactly true, we are still intentionally, and therefore in the criminal sense, liars.

3. *In rashly asserting what is not true, when the assertion springs from a sinful neglect of examining.*

Inconsiderate and rash men assert roundly, although they do not know that which they assert to be true, and have no sufficient reasons for believing it to be true. This conduct is derived only from the want of a just sense of the importance of truth and the value of veracity. Such a sense will prompt every man who possesses it to examine before he asserts; to assert with watchfulness and caution; and where he does not feel himself warranted to make unqualified declarations, to express his belief, his opinion, or his apprehension.

No excuse can be given for this indifference to truth. To mankind its importance is infinite. The sacrifice of it is in all instances an injury, which can neither be repaired

nor recalled. Every man is bound to regard it in this manner, to enable himself to speak truth only, whenever he speaks at all. He therefore, who by a voluntary negligence is led rashly to make false assertions, is without excuse.

*In professing to declare the whole truth, and yet concealing a part of it with an intention to deceive.*

A wilful deception is here intended and accomplished: the very thing which constitutes the essence of lying. The means indeed differ; but the spirit, and the guilt, and the purpose, are the same.

There is, I acknowledge, a prudent and justifiable concealment, as well as a guilty one. What others have not a right to know we are not bound to declare. Nor are we of course bound to disclose the whole of a subject in many cases, where we may be willing to communicate a part. But in every case our disclosures and our concealments must be exactly accordant with our professions. The writer who professes to record the whole of a story is inexcusable if he narrate only a part, although every thing which he actually declares may be true. The witness who, under the oath of evidence, withholds any things which he knows pertaining to the subject in debate, is perjured.

5. *In colouring the subject of our declarations so as to give it a different aspect from the true one.*

This is an extensive field of falsehood; too extensive indeed to be thoroughly explored at the present time.

A common mode of transgressing in the way here generally described, is *to represent* the conduct of others *truly* perhaps *as to the principal facts,* and to surround it with such circumstances, annex to it such appendages, and attribute it to such motives, as taken together will give it an appearance either partially or wholly false; and, as is common in instances of this nature, very injurious to them.

Another mode of transgressing in this way, is to exhibit the opinions or doctrines of others not in language which they would acknowledge, but in language of our own choice; selected for the purpose of rendering such opinions or doctrines absurd and deformed, and of rendering those who hold them odious to others: this is almost of course ac-

companied with what is exactly of the same nature, charging upon them consequences which *we* make, and *they* disclaim.

*The doctrines of the reformation* have, in a very remarkable manner, been followed and persecuted with this species of falsehood. It is at least extraordinary, if not singular, that these doctrines are never, or very rarely if ever, represented by those who oppose them in such terms as are used by those who profess them; but in terms which materially vary the nature of the doctrines. In this manner it is plainly intended to make them objects of alarm and abhorrence to others; and to engage by this obliquity of representation the passions of mankind in a course of hostility against their defenders. Every class of men have undoubtedly a right to express their own opinions in their own terms; and to admit or reject such consequences of their opinions as they think proper. The doctrines may indeed be fairly impeached, and by argument shewn to be absurd, if it can be done; and any consequences may, so far as it can be shewn by reason, be proved to follow from them. But to vary the terms in which the doctrine is exhibited, from those in which it is declared by its defenders, and to charge them with holding it in such a manner as we are pleased to express it; to draw consequences from it at our own pleasure, and exhibit them as the opinions of those with whom we contend, although disclaimed by them; is plainly disingenuous, false, and criminal.

Another example of the same nature is presented to us by *constructive narration.*

By this I intend, *that narration in which the writer or speaker construes events, together with the actions, motives, and characters, of those concerned in them in such a manner as he pleases;* that is, *in a manner accordant with his own views, interests, passions, and prejudices; and interweaves his constructions in the recital without giving any notice of this fact so as to make them an inseparable part of the narrative.* The reader here is unable to tell what is fact, and what is construction; and of course, unless preserved from it by superior discernment, is betrayed into a belief of all the errors created by the prejudices of the writer. A great part of modern history is, if I mistake not,

written in this unfortunate manner; and in this respect differs essentially and unhappily from the ancient manner of narration. Falsehood is here taught in a mode which seems often to defy detection, and which at least in my view is inexcusable.

The ridicule of what is true, just, good, honourable, or sacred, is an evil of the same nature. The things represented by him who uses the ridicule, are commonly real; and were they represented in their own native and true colours, would not be and could not be made ridiculous. But they are falsely coloured; are violently connected with appendages with which they have naturally no connexion; are distorted, maimed, and forced into every unnatural and monstrous attitude. The ridiculousness and absurdity which cannot be found in the things themselves, are fastened upon them. When presented to the eye once in this association, created by the hand of ill-natured ingenuity, it will be difficult for the mind to disjoin them afterward. In this manner, things of the most important, solemn, and venerable nature, having been once seen in the light of absurdity through an artificial association, are often regarded as absurd and contemptible through life. No excuse can be pleaded for this unworthy and disingenuous conduct.

Of the same nature are also what are called *marvellous stories*. Persons of a lively imagination are prone greatly to admire almost every thing which they see or hear, and to find an excessive pleasure in whatever is really wonderful. With this disposition they are led to represent almost all things which they relate as extraordinary and surprising. Were we to give full credit to what they say, we should be ready to believe that their lives had passed only through scenes of a marvellous kind, and that they had hardly ever met with ordinary beings or ordinary events. The language of these persons is, to a great extent, made up of superlatives only; and their images are drawn only in the strongest and most glowing colours.

Such persons have, I acknowledge, as little intention to deceive in many, perhaps in most instances, as other men. Still, through an eagerness to enhance every thing which they relate, the representations which they give are continually untrue: and the apprehensions which they excite

are regularly erroneous. There may be, there often is, no intentional deception in their thoughts. Still they continually deceive, and that of choice; that they may enjoy the pleasure found in the indulgence of an eager imagination.

6. *In flattery and censure.*

Flattery is the ascription of good qualities to others which they do not possess, or in greater degrees than they possess them. Sometimes this ascription is the result of the mere warmth of affection; and is then, though not wholly undeserving of censure, undoubtedly less criminal than in other cases. No warmth of affection, and no worth in the object of it, will however justify us in speaking that which is not true. Usually it is dictated by sinister views, and intended to be the means of accomplishing unworthy purposes. In this case the author of it is a palpable though a very pleasing liar. The purpose which he has in view is a sinful one; and the means which he adopts to compass it are always sinful and contemptible. Accordingly, mankind have proverbially declared the flatterer to be an odious and despicable wretch.

Censure is often just and vindicable; often a duty; and not unfrequently a proof of superior worth. This however invariably supposes, that the censure is deserved; that it is demanded by the nature of the case; and that it is administered solely to promote the good of the censured, and not to gratify the pride or ill-nature of the censurer. But as the word is used above, it is intended to denote a false denial of good qualities, or a false ascription of bad ones, adopted to gratify our own unworthy feelings, and to wound those of another. Falsehood of this nature is too well understood, and too generally detested, to need any comment.

7. *In alleging, to support a doctrine or a cause,* arguments *which in our own view are unsound; or alleging those which have some degree of soundness and weight, as having more weight than we believe; or alleging them with more confidence than we really experience in our minds.*

*Veracity, as it respects arguments,* demands, that we allege such as in our view are really sound; that we attribute to them exactly the weight which we believe them to possess; and that we advance them with expressions of no more confidence in them than we actually feel. No reason can

be alleged why we may wilfully deceive in our arguments, any more than in our declarations; or why sophistry is less guilty than what is appropriately called lying. The conduct in both cases is the same; *viz.* a wilful deception. The design is the same. The mischiefs also are as great in the former case, and often greater, than in the latter. Nor can any reason be alleged to prove the guilt less.

Of the same nature is *the concealment of such arguments as we possess,* when the support of truth and justice demands them, or the overthrow of falsehood and injustice.

8. *In promise-breaking.*

A promise is *an engagement to do or abstain from something, either absolutely or conditionally.* When this engagement is made to God, it is termed *a vow;* when to our fellow-men, *a promise.* The laws of morality which regulate both are in substance the same. When a promise is made absolutely, or when the conditions on which it is made are performed, we are bound to fulfil it exactly according to its tenor. Nor can we be released from its obligation, unless the performance is either impossible or unlawful; or unless by the consent of him to whom the promise is made. In every other case the violation of the promise is a lie; at least as criminal, base, and detestable, as any other.

*Our obligations to veracity are greatly enhanced by an oath:* one of the most solemn and affecting transactions in which man is ever concerned. In this transaction, God, our Creator, Judge, and Rewarder; God, who *requireth truth in the inward parts;* God, who *seeth not as man seeth,* but who *looketh on the heart;* is invoked as an awful witness of the manner in which we speak. If we speak truth, we declare our hope of his mercy: if we speak falsely, we imprecate his vengeance. What rational being, hitherto ignorant of the perjuries which deform this guilty world, could believe, that any man thus situated, would fail to speak truth with the deepest solicitude, and the most perfect exactness! Yet perjury is in the list of human crimes; and forms no inconsiderable part of that dreadful catalogue.

The guilt of every species of lying, when perpetrated under the solemnities of an oath, is enhanced by these considerations. The sin, in almost all cases, is more deliber-

rately committed. The person to whom an oath is administered, has every opportunity which he can wish for summoning up to the view of his mind every motive to the performance of his duty, and every inducement to abstain from falsehood. These inducements also are the strongest conceivable. God, in a peculiar manner, is present to his thoughts: the *God of truth*, who has declared, that all *liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone*. His soul is put at hazard on his utterance of truth or falsehood. If he speaks falsehood, he voluntarily consigns himself to perdition. If he is guilty of perjury, he is ruined also for this world. The stain is too deep ever to be wiped away. At the same time, he does what is in his power to cut up confidence by the roots. *An oath for confirmation*, says St. Paul, *is to men the end of all controversy*. Heb. vi. 16. If the confidence reposed in an oath could be reposed no more, human disputes must either be unsettled or terminated by the strength of the arm; and to this end he who perjures himself does all in his power to conduct them.

At the same time it is ever to be remembered, that God himself has been pleased on various occasions *to confirm his own word by an oath*. In this maner he has testified to us, that in his view an oath adds a peculiar sanction to that which has been said even by himself. Universally, he who utters a falsehood, under this solemn obligation to speak truth, sins against all the motives which can be conceived to influence him to the performance of his duty.

*The causes of lying*, the second thing proposed in the scheme of this discourse, *are generally, all the temptations which men feel to this unhappy practice*. Men utter falsehood extensively for the acquisition of wealth, honour, power, and pleasure; to advance the purposes of party; to ensure success in a controversy; to gain a favourite point; to mortify a rival or an enemy; and for innumerable other purposes. In the discourse which I delivered on the sub- of *frauds practised on our fellow-men*, numerous specimens of this nature were either alluded to, or expressly mentioned. Similar specimens, perhaps equally numerous, are attendant upon the eager pursuit of all those worldly gratifi-

cations which men ardently covet. *I know of no case in which lying more abounds, than that of vehement party contention.* Universally, men embarked in unworthy designs, as I shall have occasion to mention more particularly hereafter, find falsehood exceedingly convenient, if not indispensable, to their success. Depraved as mankind are, a bad cause cannot be carried on with success, without the aid either of falsehood or the sword.

All these are *immediate* causes of lying. Those to which I have originally referred are *more remote.* They are such as subvert the original tendency to speak truth, which we regularly find in the earliest ages of life. The influence of these causes is peculiarly exerted upon the minds of such as are young; and they are led into habits of lying before they are capable of understanding either their guilt or their danger. These causes are principally the following.

1. *Children are often taught to lie by example.*

Few persons of adult years are perhaps sufficiently sensible how soon children begin to understand the nature of those things which they see and hear, especially the nature of human conduct. From this, as well as from other causes, it frequently happens, that many things are done and said before very young children, which would not be said or done if it were well understood, that the children would clearly comprehend and regularly copy them. By this misapprehension the members of many a family, and unhappily the parents also, are often induced to make their children witnesses of palpable falsehoods, when, bad as themselves are, they would not corrupt their children in this manner, were they aware, that their conduct would thus become the means of corruption. Often these falsehoods are uttered in earnest; often they are uttered in jest. In both cases their influence is alike pernicious.

The power of all example is great, especially of evil example; but perhaps in no case greater than in that of falsehood. Here the falsehood is brought home to the child with an influence wholly peculiar. It is uttered by those whom he loves; by those whom he venerates; by those of whom he has never formed a disadvantageous suspicion. It is calmly and coolly told to others in his presence, without a doubt expressed of its rectitude; and is at times ac-

companied by a direct explanation of the advantages which are hoped from it. At other times, it is uttered in the zeal of dispute, and warmth of passion. At other times, a multitude of falsehoods are combined together in a marvellous story, and in many families such stories form no small part of the domestic conversation. At other times still, and instances innumerable, the private history of persons and families in the neighbourhood, furnishes an almost endless tissue of interwoven truth and falsehood; and constitutes the chief entertainment of the house. Families composed of sprightly members, make also innumerable assertions in jest which are untrue; which the child who hears them perceives to be untrue; and for the falsehood of which he does not perceive the sport to yield any justification.

All these, even very young children will usually discern to be falsehoods. No person can wonder that they should be induced to adopt this conduct, when he remembers that it is set before them continually in so many modes, by those who are so much the objects of affection and reverence. That children derive this turpitude, in very many instances, originally and chiefly from such an example, they themselves abundantly prove. The reason which they almost always give, and first give, for the commission of this crime, is, that others have done the same thing.

In multiplied instances falsehoods *are directly told to children*, particularly very young children, to persuade them to acquiesce cheerfully in things which are disagreeable. Children, like older persons, have many wishes, the gratification of which is in their view important to their happiness; but which others know to be fraught with danger and mischief. To persuade them quietly to give up such gratifications, parents and others frequently adopt the easy and convenient method of deceiving them. Thus parents who wish to go abroad, and to persuade their young children to remain at home, often declare that they are going out to return immediately; while the children clearly discern that the declaration is false. When parents also or others are abroad whose absence is very painful to children; servants and others to quiet them declare often, that

the parents are returning, are in sight, or will return within a very short time. To persuade them to take medicines, the children are assured that they are sweet and pleasant, when in truth they are bitter and loathsome. To conceal from them designs also and facts which it is undesirable that they should know, many artful and insidious declarations are made to them; which, together with all those mentioned above, the children, in spite of the address employed to prevent it, discern to be false. Thus, to quiet them for a moment, they are often taught to become liars through life.

In a similar manner, children are deceived and corrupted *by false promises.* They are sick; are reluctant to take medicines; are peevish and fretful; are wished by their parents to make little efforts to display their talents and accomplishments, for the entertainment of visitors, and the gratification also of parental pride. To overcome their reluctance to these efforts, soothe their sufferings, and to quiet their fretfulness, they are promised money, new clothes, the possession of toys and privileges, and particularly the privilege of going abroad. But the performance of such promises will usually occasion either trouble or expense. Very often, therefore, they are not performed. In this work of falsehood, parents, brethren, sisters, friends, and servants, frequently all unite; and the unfortunate children, who perfectly comprehend the deceit, find sometimes the whole, and sometimes a part, of the family thus combined for their destruction.

Equally unhappy are they in *the examples which they find abroad.* Children thus corrupted carry the miserable contagion to school. All their companions, who have been educated with happier care and under better examples, are here exposed to the disease; and in many instances become infected and leprous through life.

At the same time, *children are often permitted to frequent places to which vile and unprincipled persons resort;* and there become witnesses of all their abominable sentiments and conduct. Here lies are not only told, but are made the subjects of jest and diversion. Successful falsehoods and impositions are not only repeated, but repeated with explanations, merriment, and triumph; and exhibited as

proofs of superior address and honourable ingenuity. What child can fail of corruption in such haunts of sin, and amid such examples of villany!

2. *Children are taught to lie by influence.*

In very early life, children discover a strong tendency to talk abundantly, to repeat marvellous stories; to rehearse private history; and to recount the little occurrences of the neighbourhood. *In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin.* Every tendency to loquacity ought, therefore, to be vigorously repressed. The disposition to recite marvellous stories, to give characters, and to recount private history and the occurrences of the neighbourhood, increases by every indulgence, and soon becomes both habitual and enormous.

Instead of checking these propensities, however, no small number of parents, unaware of the danger and forgetful of their duty, directly listen and inquire; and in many instances repeat what has been said in this manner by their children. In this conduct the children perceive that they derive consequence in the parental eye, from the fact that they utter things of this nature; and are efficaciously taught, that what they have said, instead of being criminal, odious, and disgraceful, is right and pleasing. They are naturally and powerfully led, therefore, to increase instead of slacken their efforts; and to multiply their tales of these unfortunate kinds. From repeating they go on to exaggerating; from rehearsing to inventing; and from inventing such parts as the memory does not supply, to inventing the whole. In this manner they become, after no great length of time, absolute liars.

In multitudes of instances also children, to gain favourite objects and interesting compliances from their companions, are induced *to make promises* of various kinds. These afterward they are often disinclined to fulfil. The parent, whose duty it is to compel performance, finding the child reluctant, because it involves some sacrifice of his playthings, his property, or his convenience, neglects his duty, and suffers the promise to go unfulfilled. In this manner he gives his own sanction to a direct breach of faith, infinitely more mischievous to the child, than the loss of all the gratifications which he ever possessed. Nay, in some

instances the child is even encouraged, and in some directly commanded, not to fulfil his promise; because perhaps the fulfilment will be very painful to the child, or in some degree inconvenient to the parent. In all such cases as I have mentioned, nothing can be expected but that the child should grow up without truth and of course without any moral principle.

3. *Children are often driven to falsehood by passion.*

There are parents, whose whole life is an almost continual scene of passion. There are others, who *often* break out into paroxysms of rage. Among these, the number is not small of those who exercise this furious spirit towards their children; not unfrequently because their faults, whether real or supposed, disturb their own quiet, and make, or seem to make, it necessary for them to undertake, what they equally hate and dread, the task of parental discipline. The unhappy children are in such cases commonly assailed with the looks and language of a fury, instead of those of a Christian parent. Terrified at this storm of wrath and rage, the children are in a sense compelled, under the influence of the severest threatenings, to lie, in order to conceal their faults, and escape the dreaded infliction. Passion manifested towards children, whatever may have been their transgressions, is madness; shameful to the parent, and ruinous to the child. The parent who exercises it, can expect nothing but that his child should become a liar.

4. *Children are often forced to lie by punishment.*

Parents in many instances feel satisfied that they have done their duty, when they have corrected their children for this crime. Accordingly, as often as the children repeat the crime, they repeat the punishment. Hardly any mistake, with respect to the government of children, can be more unhappy than this. So far as my own experience can be relied on, the same punishment can never be safely repeated in any great number of instances for the same fault. Usually, when administered once, if administered wisely, it will produce its whole efficacy on the child. All the supernumerary inflictions appear ordinarily to terminate in hardening the child; and, so far as my observation extends, in no case more effectually than in that of lying. Perhaps the rod is oftener used for the purpose of extir-

pating this fault than any other; and in no case I suspect with smaller success. The propriety and usefulness of correction at early periods of childhood, are sanctioned by abundant experience, and by God himself. But reiterated correction, I mean often reiterated, has I believe rarely cured a child of falsehood; while it has confirmed multitudes in this sin beyond every rational hope of reformation.

The consciousness of having been often corrected, produces of course, in the mind of every child who is the subject of this discipline, an habitual sense of degradation. A sense of degradation is more nearly allied, than mankind are usually aware, to hardness of heart. When punishment fails of producing repentance, it is commonly followed by indifference to the crime; often by a determination to repeat it, and usually by feelings of revenge towards the author of the infliction. A child has told a lie. The parent has been provoked by it. The child has been corrected, but has not become a penitent. On the contrary, he feels that he has been injured; and instead of regarding the lie as a crime, considers it only as an unfortunate cause of his own suffering. The turpitude of the act is therefore forgotten and lost in the sense of suffering. To retribute the abuse will naturally seem in this case a gratification of no contemptible importance. A new crime is therefore committed as soon as his own safety will permit. He is accused of it, and a new lie is told to shield him from another correction. In this manner, he will soon begin to believe, that both his lies and his other crimes are merely a balance for a given measure of punishment, and will calculate how many blows it will be prudent to hazard for the pleasure of committing a fault, and the convenience of telling a lie. The parent who governs his child in this manner, takes, in my opinion, well-directed measures to make him a villain.

# SERMON CXXVII.

## NINTH COMMANDMENT.

### MISCHIEFS AND PREVENTIVES OF LYING.

*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*—EXOD. XX. 16.

IN the preceding discourse I proposed to consider
*The nature;*
*The causes;*
*The mischiefs;* and,
*The preventives; of lying.*

The two first of these subjects I discussed at that time. I shall now proceed to discuss the two last. The

1st *Mischief of lying is the great and general one; that it is a sin against God.*

There have not been wanting persons in every age who have holden the doctrine, *that lying is in some cases lawful.* Among these have been many professed moralists, and at least some divines. Particularly the very respectable writer whose opinions I have several times questioned, archdeacon Paley has taught this doctrine in form in his System of Moral Philosophy. At the head of these men we find the celebrated name of Origen. This father, with an indistinctness of discernment which characterizes not a small number of early writers in the Christian church, as well as most others at the same period, appears to have believed that a falsehood might be lawfully told in order to promote the cause of Christianity. This scheme universally extended, is no other than the fundamental and detestable maxim of illuminism; *that the end sanctions the means;* a maxim on which St. Paul has pronounced a terrible sentence of condemnation, while common sense and common honesty subjoin their united *amen.*

Dr. Paley, who strongly reprobates the doctrine of Ori-

gen, has in my opinion fallen into an error as really, though not so extensively, mischievous. He declares *those falsehoods, where the person to whom you speak has no right to know the truth;* or, more properly, *where little or no inconvenience results from the want of confidence; in such cases, not to be lies;* that is, *not to be criminal falsehoods.* The instances by which he illustrates the doctrine, are those of *madmen* and *robbers:* persons who, in the cases supposed, have no right to know the truth; and to deceive whom, he remarks in these cases, will either very little or not at all injure the confidence of mankind.

This is one among various other unhappy specimens of the unhappy influence of the rule prescribed by Dr. Paley for directing the moral conduct of men; viz. *that the rectitude of our moral actions is to be measured by their expediency or utility.* That utility is the *foundation* of virtue has, it is believed, been sufficiently shewn in a former discourse. That it cannot be the *criterion* of virtue has also, if I mistake not, been proved to be equally certain. Indeed, nothing is more evident, than that the moral actions of beings who cannot possibly know what their consequences will be, cannot be safely directed by those consequences. In the present case, however, Dr. Paley's own doctrine will refute his position. His declaration is, that "*falsehoods are not lies where the person to whom you speak has no right to know the truth; or, more properly, where little or no inconveniencey results from the want of confidence in such cases; as where you tell a falsehood to a madman for his own advantage; to a robber to conceal your property; to an assassin to defeat or to divert him from his purpose.*" "*In each of these cases* (the author says), *the particular good consequence will overbalance the general evil consequence;*" and thence he concludes the falsehood to be lawful.

Two cases are here stated in which a wilful falsehood is pronounced to be lawful. *One is, that in which the person in question has no right to know the truth. The other, when little or no inconvenience will result from falsehood.*

On the first of these I observe, that the person who is to utter the falsehood or the truth, in the case supposed, is always to determine, whether the person to whom he speaks has a right to know the truth or not. This determination

also is ever to be made under the influence of such passions and biasses as may then happen to operate. It is impossible that the decision should fail, at least in most cases, of being a prejudiced, and therefore an unsound one. The person who is entangled with a madman, or assailed by a robber or an assassin, must at the time be a very imperfect moralist; and in a very improper situation to decide justly concerning a question of this nicety and importance. What is true in this case is equally true of an infinity of others. Passion and prejudice would operate boundlessly on this subject in the ordinary course of human affairs; and wherever they operated would control. On this very principle it has been decided by the Romish church, that it is lawful to lie to Hugonots; because Hugonots are such enemies to God as to have no right to know the truth: a doctrine which has probably done more towards corrupting that church than any, perhaps than all, the enormous errors by which it has been disgraced. The consequence, as may be easily seen in the history of this very fact, would soon be, that few or none of those with whom we had intercourse after this doctrine had become general, would in our view have a right to know the truth.

That there are persons who in certain cases have not a right to know the truth from *us*, I readily grant. But it will be difficult to shew, that we have a right to utter falsehood to *them* any more than to *others*. We may lawfully be silent in many cases; we may lawfully conceal the truth; but we can in no case be justified in uttering a wilful falsehood.

With regard to the other rule of Dr. Paley, *that voluntary falsehoods cease to be lies when very little inconvenience will result from the want of confidence which follows them*; I observe, that it is even more unhappy than the other. The degree of *inconvenience*, which in this case will result to others, will always be estimated by comparing it with the *convenience* which the falsehood will promise to ourselves. The convenience which will overcome the natural repugnance of conscience to wilful falsehood, must *for the time* be felt to be considerable. In a comparison with a considerable convenience of our own, an inconvenience experienced either wholly or at least chiefly by others, will naturally be regarded as inconsiderable. In almost all in-

stances therefore, to use the words of Dr. Paley, "little or no inconvenience will result from the falsehood," in the view of him who is to utter it and who makes this comparison. Of course in almost all instances the falsehood will be uttered.

But when a man has once accustomed himself to utter falsehood so long as to render the practice familiar, all that apprehensiveness of guilt, that ready susceptibility of alarm at the appearance of criminality, which constitutes the chief safety of man in the moment of temptation, will be extinguished. The mind will be no longer agitated at the thought of sin, nor awake to the sense of danger. In this situation, the convenience of uttering falsehood to ourselves will always be great; and the inconveniency which will result to others will always be small. He who has uttered the first falsehood under the influence of ten degrees of temptation, will as readily utter the second under the influence of eight; the third, of six; the fourth, of four; the fifth, of two; and the sixth without any temptation at all. The obliquity of his judgment will now prevent him from discerning that others suffer any inconvenience from his conduct. In this manner any man living may easily become in a short time a confirmed liar.

Thus the adoption of either of these rules, and still more of both of them, will prove a complete destruction of that confidence without which society cannot exist. I need not say, that this evil would more than counterbalance all the good which a licentious imagination has ever supposed, or can suppose to be capable of resulting from all possible falsehoods, in a degree which no numbers can estimate, and no finite mind conceive. Utility itself, therefore, absolutely forbids the adoption of these rules.

But this view of the subject is imperfect, and so far erroneous. The old distinction of crimes, into what are styled by jurists *mala in se* and *mala prohibita*, is entirely just, as well as incalculably important. The *mala in se* are *those which are absolutely forbidden by God;* because they are universally noxious to the intelligent creation, and universally dishonourable to the Creator. He who sees from the beginning to the end, and discerns all the possible consequences of all moral conduct, has thus pronounced them

to be universally malignant in their influence on intelligent beings. *Mala prohibita* are *such evils as are forbidden in certain circumstances which render them evils; or for the accomplishment of certain useful purposes which could not otherwise be so well accomplished.* These in the ordinary state of things would be matters of indifference; and unless prohibited, would either not be, or not be known to be, evils. Such for example was the eating of unclean meats; the assumption of the priest's office by those who were not the descendants from Aaron; and many others found in the Jewish law.

Lying is a pre-eminent evil *of the former class.* Accordingly, it is *absolutely forbidden by God.* The proof that it is such an evil, furnished in the discourse on the nature and importance of truth and veracity (the first delivered on the text) is if I mistake not complete. Truth and the utterance of it were there shewn to be the foundation of all society, and the basis of all virtue and happiness. If this be admitted, lying is plainly a radical evil, threatening the very existence of the divine glory, and the whole interest of the intelligent universe. In the Scriptures, it is unconditionally forbidden, deeply censured, and terribly threatened. *Whosoever loveth and maketh a lie,* God has said, *shall in nowise enter into the* heavenly *city; but shall have his part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.* Lying then is in this respect infinitely mischievous; as peculiarly provoking the anger of God, and being eminently the means of eternal woe. It is to be remembered, that the Scriptures no where relax no this subject; furnish no indulgence to the practice; contain not a single hint that lying can ever be lawful; and are absolutely silent concerning that want of right to know the truth, and that smallness of inconvenience resulting from falsehood, which will make a falsehood wilfully uttered cease to be a lie.

The case is often put, *that a lie may save one's own life, or the lives of others.* The objection involved in this case is answered in many forms by the Scriptures. St. Paul declares, that *the condemnation of those who only reported,* that he and his companions taught the doctrine of *doing evil that good might come, was just.* What would he have said of those who themselves taught this doctrine? Let no

man think this a hard case. Christ has repeatedly told us, that *he who will save his life* by violating his duty, *shall lose it; and* that *he who shall lose his life for his sake,* that is, by doing his duty, *shall find it* in the heavens. With this declaration in view, no man, it is presumed, will think himself required to utter a lie for the sake of saving his life. Had the apostles and the martyrs thought proper to lie, they might not only have saved their lives, but avoided also all the horrors and sufferings of malignant persecution.

It has been alleged, and supposed to afford some degree of countenance to this sin, that it was committed by Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and some other saints of ancient times. Without attempting to determine how far the faults of these good men may have been diminished by their imperfectly critical acquaintance with the proper nature of moral conduct, I shall answer the allegation by this question only. Will your sin be lessened, or fail of being punished, because the same sin was committed by a patriarch?

2. *Lying produces incomprehensible mischief to the public concerns of nations.*

All good government, as I have heretofore observed, is founded in confidence; and all oppressive government in force or fraud. Governments constitutionally free resort invariably to fraud whenever they wish to oppress. Every despotism itself is compelled universally to the same resort, and is afraid and unwilling to rely on mere physical strength for the accomplishment of its tyrannical designs. It has recourse therefore to an uninterrupted series of art and management to ensure the submission of its subjects. Of this management deceit is not merely the chief but in a sense the only means. All tyrants lie, and lie unceasingly. All their subordinate agents are abandoned liars. Were the tyrant himself and the instruments of his tyranny to lay aside their deception, the tyranny would tumble to the ground.

If the rulers of a nation possessing liberty were invariably to utter truth, it would be impossible that the government should not be well administered. Should such rulers form evil designs against public or private happiness, an honest disclosure of their purposes would defeat them of course. This every ruler who forms such designs knows

perfectly well; and therefore he artfully misrepresents or studiously conceals them. But no design of any extent can be executed without a disclosure to all those who are necessarily employed in the execution. Were *these* men of integrity, they would disclose it of course to the public. Such men are therefore never voluntarily employed by rulers to accomplish evil designs. Men of falsehood are invariably sought for such purposes, and invariably employed in accomplishing them.

The person who has not read political history with an eye to this subject, is an incompetent judge of the immense extent to which falsehood is employed for the purpose of oppression, and of the innumerable forms in which it has been played off upon the unhappy race of men for their destruction. Art and trick, pretence and sophistry, false declarations and false promises, have ever been a more formidable host of enemies to public liberty, safety, and happiness, than the sword and the musket, the dungeon and the gibbet. Falsehood has ever been the mine by which the enemies of freedom have blown up her citadel, and buried her votaries in the ruins. Falsehood ruined the freedom of Greece and Rome; and overturned all the republics of modern Europe. Without this terrible engine the Romish hierarchy would never have raised its head to heaven; nor trodden down in the dust the suffering nations of men. Without this tremendous assistant, the French republic would never have sprung into existence; nor offered up half Europe as a holocaust to the powers of darkness. Banish falsehood from the world, and you will redeem it from three fourths of its sins, and from almost all its sufferings.

Nations have in most cases eagerly watched against the intrusions of power, and the establishment of internal force. So far they have acted wisely. But, without the aid of falsehood, no force beside that of a foreign conqueror ever destroyed public liberty. Against this enemy they ought to watch with the eyes of Argus; a creeping, serpentine enemy; advancing silently and imperceptibly; equally unseen and unsuspected. If they were willing to become wise by the miserable experience of those who have gone before them, they would know that their supreme danger lies here; that every ruler who flatters them, that every de-

magogue, is a liar; that he deceives them for his own advantage, not for theirs; for the overthrow of their liberty, not for its own establishment; for the ruin of their interests, not for their peace, prosperity, or safety.

*If a ruler hearken to lies*, says Solomon, *all his servants are wicked. Judgment*, saith the prophet Isaiah, *is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off.* What was the source of these calamities? Let the prophet himself answer. *Truth is fallen in the streets, and* therefore *equity cannot enter.* It is the glorious character of HIM whose dominion *is as the light of the morning, of a morning without clouds, and as the clear shining of the sun after rain upon the tender herb of the field, that he shall judge the people with truth.* It is a divine characteristic of the infinite Ruler, that his paths are mercy and truth. Such must be the character of earthly rulers, if they would be *ministers of* GOD *for good;* or if their subjects are to be either safe or happy.

But we need not appeal to a numerous train of scriptural texts for instruction on this subject. In Psalm cxliv. there is the strongest, and perhaps the most comprehensive, exhibition of its importance which can be found even in the scriptural pages, and which ever will be found in the language of men. In this portion of the sacred canon, David, contemplating the wars in which he had been, and more probably those in which he was at that very time engaged; remembering the usual care and good providence of God exercised towards him in his contests with his enemies; and feeling that this was amply sufficient for his safety and success in every case of hostility waged by open force; breaks out in a joyful song of exultation for these blessings, as already partly received, and as partly secured to him for the time to come. *Blessed be* JEHOVAH *my strength, who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight; my goodness and my fortress, my high tower and my deliverer, my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.*

After some short reflections on the humble and undeserving character of man naturally excited by the contemplation of these mercies, he turns his eye to the state of his own kingdom, probably convulsed at that time by the rebellion of Absalom; a rebellion generated and supported

by falsehood; he exclaims, *Bow thy heavens, O* JEHOVAH, *and come down; touch the mountains and they shall smoke: cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them: send thine hand from above: rid me, and deliver me out of the great waters, from the hand of strange children; whose mouth speaketh vanity* (that is, lies), *and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.* To this great man the ordinary blessings of God's providence to him and his people appeared a defence amply sufficient, and sources of victory sure and abundant against the violence of war and the enemies in arms. But when he came to consider the danger which threatened his government and nation from the insidious attacks of deception, he felt that a new and singular interference of God was necessary for the deliverance of himself and his people. Then it became necessary that God should *bow the heavens and come down;* that he should set the mountains on fire; that he should *cast forth his lightnings to scatter, and shoot out his arrows to destroy,* these children of falsehood. Such in his view was the danger of the people of Israel from the deceptions practised upon them, that nothing less than these wonderful exertions of divine power would ensure their safety.

At the same time he informs us in the strongest terms, that a deliverance from this terrible kind of warfare, from the spirit which generated it, and from the persons by whom it was carried on, was indispensable to the internal prosperity of the nation both moral and secular. *Rid me,* he exclaims again, *and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh lies, and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood: that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace; that our garners may be full, affording all manner of store; that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets; that our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets. Happy,* he subjoins, *is that people that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people whose God is* JEHOVAH.

These are blessings which cannot be found in a nation

among whom falsehood prevails. There men will not labour to produce them: there God will not give them. They are blessings which truth leads in her train; blessings which God showers upon a people who love truth. But at the approach of falsehood they shrink, languish, and expire.

All this it is to be remembered was written by David; one of the greatest and wisest men, whom the world has ever seen. He knew by experience every danger from war; from open enemies embodied in powerful armies. By the same experience he was perfectly acquainted also with the evils which spring from falsehood. The evils of the latter class he perceived by actual trial to be immensely greater than those of the former. In these observations he has barely told us what passed under his own eye, and constituted his own case. Nay more, he has told all this directly to his Maker; and in a psalm addressed directly to him, has poured forth the praises which he esteemed due, and prayed for the assistance which he deemed necessary. In these circumstances the sincerity of the suppliant cannot be questioned.

But it is farther to be remembered, that this psalm was dictated by the inspiration of God. It is all therefore exactly just and true. Nothing is diminished: nothing is exaggerated. Falsehood is just so much more dangerous in the ordinary circumstances of mankind than war; its evils are just so much more terrible; and peculiar interpositions of God to deliver mankind from their efficacy, are in this very manner indispensable. Truth also is accompanied and followed by all these blessings; blessings which, fairly understood, involve the whole prosperity of a people. At the same time, falsehood either prevents or destroys them all: or, in other words, ruins the nation in which it prevails.

3. *Falsehood is equally pernicious to the private interests of mankind.*

A great proportion of all their miscarriages in the pursuit of happiness, are suffered by mankind from *intentional misinformation only*. A man is falsely informed of the state of the markets; and conveys his property to a ruinous sale. He wishes to employ an agent to manage his

business; to instruct his children; or to plead his cause. He wishes to employ a physician to attend his family in cases of sickness; or a clergyman to preach for himself and his neighbours. The character of each of these men is represented to him falsely. Of consequence his business is mismanaged; his children are half taught; his cause is lost by ignorance or treachery; his family are hastened to the grave by an empiric: and himself and his neighbours, by false exhibitions of the gospel, are led to perdition. The beggar cheats him by a false tale of woe. The false friend betrays his interests and his secrets. A false witness swears away his rights; and a false judge perverts the law to his ruin. A flatterer deceives himself into fatal apprehensions concerning his own excellences. A censurer breaks his unfounded and malignant representations of his defects; and a sophist cheats him out of truth, virtue, and heaven. The frauds practised on our fellow-men, which were either recited or alluded to in a preceding discourse on that subject, are all perpetrated by the instrumentality of falsehood. This harpy seizes on every human enjoyment, and on every human interest; destroys whatever is in her power; and pollutes and distresses wherever she is unable to destroy.

4. *Equally pernicious is falsehood to the personal interests of the liar himself.*

The importance of this truth will appear in the following particulars.

In the first place. *Lying is always followed by reproaches of conscience.*

Mankind with a single voice have pronounced lying to be a gross and enormous sin. This is the dictate of every other religion, and every other law, as well as of the law and the religion of God. To this universal testimony the conscience of every individual unites its own solemn accord; and, whenever a lie is uttered, proclaims the guilt of the criminal with an affecting and awful voice. At the sound of this remonstrance, the soul trembles and shrinks; and before the bar of this severe judge, is compelled to plead guilty without a hope of escape.

Nor is it compelled only to acknowledge its *guilt*, but also clearly to see and deeply to feel its peculiar *baseness*,

*ment.* A liar is obliged irresistibly to feel, that he is sunk below the level of men. His mind is a house of pollution; a haunt of every despicable purpose, and every degrading thought. Thus his character, as seen by myself, lies upon him like *a heavy burden,* too *grievous to be borne;* a load which he can neither carry nor lay down.

In the mean time conscience, faithful to her office, holds up to his view, in terrible forebodings, the anger of God against lying lips; and presents to him alarming anticipations of the dreadful account which he will be obliged to give at the future judgment. Such I mean is the fact, unless through the want of a religious education he is destitute of moral principle; or by a repetition of crimes his *conscience* has become *seared as with a hot iron.*

Secondly. *The liar is continually tormented by the fear of detection.*

A liar is never safe. It is so much the interest of mankind to expose this crime, and it is so often actually exposed, that the danger is always great, and always felt by the criminal. Should a detection take place, the consequences he knows must be distressing. The shame, the hatred, the contempt, and the punishment, which in this case will arrest him, he knows not how to meet with a steady eye. His terrified mind is therefore in perpetual alarm; and sees these evils always at the door. The *path* of life, therefore, is to him *a hedge of thorns.*

Thirdly. *Should he be detected, as he invariably will be, he is compelled to suffer many excruciating evils.*

Particularly, he is necessitated to invent many falsehoods to gain the object or prevent the evils of one.

Truth is always plain and consistent: the highway in which the *way-faring man, though a fool, need not err.* Falsehood is a by-path; crooked, perplexed, and blind; in which every traveller is soon bewildered and lost. No liar can possibly foresee either the nature or the number of the difficulties into which he will plunge himself by a single lie. These difficulties he will often feel himself compelled to obviate by such means as are in his power. Usually no other means will offer themselves to him for this purpose beside a succession of lies. Thus one falsehood in a sense necessarily draws after it another and another. Nor is any

mind which begins this course sufficiently comprehensive to know where it will end.

Those whom he has deceived also will often resent, and often severely revenge, the abuse. In one manner and another he is not unfrequently punished with severity. Always he is disgraced, reproached, stung with contempt, and insulted with derision. Decent men shun his company. Parents warn their children to beware of him. The finger of scorn points him out, the hiss of infamy follows him in the street. Even villains of most other sorts feel themselves superior to him.

His reputation of course is lost. Those whom he has deceived will take sure and exemplary vengeance in publishing the deception to the world. His rivals will trumpet it to rise above him: his kindred villains to turn the eyes of mankind from their own guilt. Should they even be silent, he will disclose it himself. The safety and success which he has found in uttering one falsehood, will embolden him to utter another and another, until he is detected. When this is done, he sinks speedily into absolute contempt. The proverb, "*Once a liar and always a liar,*" will meet him as a label from every mouth in the street.

In this character all persons will feel themselves to be his superiors; and will take effectual care to announce this superiority. The tongues of multitudes will proclaim it in the most stinging terms. The eyes of more will look down upon him with haughtiness and scorn: while the conduct of all will attest his degradation with a visible mixture of pity and abhorrence. Of course he will be obliged to feel as well as to appear only in the character of a mean debased wretch; inferior to his kind; and to act an under servile part in every scene of life. He can maintain no cause, assert no fact, make no promise, face no man, and meet no eye; but is forced to falter and fall, even before those with whom he would once have disdained to acknowlege an acquaintance.

As he loses all confidence, he loses with it every opportunity of acquiring useful and reputable employment: None will trust him with their property; none will commit to him their business; because all will expect to be rewarded by him with baseness and treachery.

But all men are dependant on their fellow-men. Peculiarly is this true of those who are young. Every youth is necessitated to lean in no small degree on those who are already in possession of the great business of mankind. Veracity to them is the door to confidence; confidence, to useful employment; and useful employment, to property, reputation, influence, and a prosperous and useful life. This door the liar has voluntarily shut against himself; and can be admitted neither to the good offices, nor even to the company, of those on whom he chiefly depends, under God, for every worldly blessing.

Thus he involves himself in innumerable distresses; and exposes himself to innumerable temptations. He is poor almost of course. Honest poverty is always and most deservedly respectable. But poverty, which grows out of vice, ensures contempt and abhorrence; and is encircled by numberless temptations which honest poverty never knew. I have already observed, that the liar is almost irresistibly prompted to a succession of falsehoods in order to escape the dangers of the first. To these he is strongly solicited to add perjury; to corrupt others, that he may countenance himself; to cheat, that he may acquire what he cannot gain by lying; and to steal, that he may possess himself of what he cannot gain by cheating.

All these scandalous vices are soon fixed into habits: and these habits every day acquire new accessions of strength. His declension therefore is rapid and dreadful. From the company, conversation, and example, of good men, indulged more or less to most sinners, he is excluded of course. Virtue may pity but cannot consort with him. His touch is contagious; and his very breath carries infection with it wherever he goes. By this exclusion he loses a blessing of more value than all the good which falsehood ever sought or found.

In this manner he goes on hardening his heart and polluting his life. His conscience becomes seared; and, sooner than he could have originally mistrusted, he is given over to a reprobate mind. In the end he dies a bitter death: and closes a shameful, wretched life with a miserable eternity.

The *preventives of this deplorable vice* may be advan-

tageously considered *as they respect children under the education of their parents, and persons arrived at years of discretion.*

The foundation of all moral good is best laid in childhood. This season, therefore, is to be regarded as of supreme importance, and husbanded for this great purpose with supreme solicitude. I shall address my observations on this subject directly to parents. To accomplish this invaluable end, so indispensable to the present and eternal welfare of your children, *Teach them,*

1. *Always to speak truth by precept and example.*

Inculcate on them, from the moment in which they are able to speak at all, and inculcate daily, the immense importance of speaking truth. Truth is so much more easily, and so much more naturally spoken than falsehood that children usually speak truth of course. Facts always present it, the mind always perceives it, the tongue always utters it, without effort or contrivance. Falsehood, on the contrary, must ever be invented, and continually laboured into existence. Before this labour has commenced, truth must be effectually impressed on the conscience, and instamped on the heart.

Teach them that veracity is inestimably useful; that it will make them loved, trusted, honoured, and befriended; and will save them from shame, neglect, reproach, and poverty, from extreme humiliation, and the terrors of a condemning conscience. Teach them, that lying will prevent all these blessings, and entail upon them all these sufferings; that it will wither their reputation, their comforts, and their hopes; that, deformed with this sin, they will be pitied by every good and insulted by every bad man; that their enemies will tread them under foot, while their friends cannot protect them; and that their character, when once habitually blackened by falsehood, can never be made white again.

Teach them, that every equivocal, every prevaricating, every evasive expression, every thing which partakes of duplicity, is radically a lie; and that if they indulge themselves in these humbler efforts of falsehood, they will soon sink to the lowest degradations of villany.

Teach them, that the eternal God, the God of truth, to whom *lying lips are an abomination,* hears, marks, and re-

cords, every thing which they speak; and that this record will be the foundation of their final sentence at the great day.

Discourage in them at all times a propensity to idle talk; to story-telling; particularly to the telling of marvellous stories, the recital of private history, the news of the neighbourhood, and the giving of characters. Lead them carefully, whenever they converse concerning others, to such conversation, and such only, as is prudent and kind: and accustom them to feel, that when they cannot speak of others in this manner, it is usually both their duty and their interest not to speak at all. Teach them faithfully to keep and never to betray the secrets intrusted to them; and effectually repress in them a disposition to pry into the personal and domestic concerns of others.

What you thus communicate by your instruction, endeavour to complete by your example. Shew on all occasions the most solemn and the most intense regard to truth. Speak truth to them exactly, on every occasion, whether in earnest or in jest. Promise them nothing which you do not faithfully resolve to fulfil. Fulfil faithfully all that you promise, however difficult or inconvenient may be the fulfilment. If at any time, and by any circumstances, they are led to suppose that you have failed to perform your promise exactly; or if the performance has, at any time subsequent to the promise, become unlawful or impossible, carefully remove every suspicion which they may entertain concerning your veracity, by a diligent explanation of every doubtful or unknown circumstance; and shew them, that your conduct has been strictly conformed to the rigid dictates of truth.

At the same time oblige them to fulfil all their own promises, however self-denying the fulfilment may be to them, and however expensive or troublesome to you. This discipline will ere long teach them not to promise rashly, and to regard every promise which they make as sacred and unalterable.

Universally make the establishment of an unwarping veracity in their minds a prime and ever-present object of your parental labours; and until this object is accomplish-

ed, devote to it the energy of your minds, and the efforts of your lives.

2. *Prevent them from keeping company with deceitful persons.*

Forbid them *absolutely* to consort with those who are known to be of this character. Restrain them from every place frequented by such persons; from taverns, from public corners, from horse-races, and universally from every lounging, idle resort. The plague is usually taken by infection. He therefore who is on healthy ground will be safe. Suffer your children then on no occasion to become the companions of loose, immoral persons. Of them your children will learn to lie of course, and *that*, however faithful may be your instructions, and however unspotted your example. Remember yourselves, and teach them, that the *companion of fools shall be destroyed.*

3. *If your children are at any time guilty of deceit, endeavour by the best means in your power to prevent every future transgression of the same nature.*

Rehearse to them solemnly and kindly all the interesting considerations which I have mentioned, and every other useful thought which your own minds may suggest. Present to them particularly, clear, affecting views of their guilt and their danger, and forcibly exhibit to them the ruinous efficacy of falsehood on every interest of time and eternity. If the transgression demands a punishment, never administer it in a passion. Delay the administration, not only until you are free from every resentful emotion, but until you are secure of preserving your equanimity, in spite of any incidental provocation, and are absolutely collected and self-controlled. In this state of mind, accompany the discipline with solemn instructions, calm reproofs, and affectionate testimonies, of the mingled pain and pity with which you regard the guilty transaction.

If one punishment, if for example correction, fails of producing a reformation, vary your inflictions successively, through the several modes of discipline, until you have gained the object. Shame or confinement will often accomplish what correction cannot. If these prove ineffectual, the denial of favourite indulgences, and the deprivа-

tion of customary privileges, will often produce reformation. A string may almost always be struck which will accord with the state of the heart, an effort made which will ensure a victory.

In the mean time, if your child is charged with some other fault and frankly tells the truth concerning it, remit either the whole or a part of the punishment due to his crime, discretionarily; as a proof of the high value which you place upon his veracity.

4. *Commend them to the constant care and blessing of God.*

*Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain.* As God alone *can* preserve them, so if you ask him in earnest, you have every reason to hope that he *will.*

I shall now address the subject to all such persons as have arrived at that period of life in which they are capable of taking some useful care of themselves. To such persons the following directions may be the means of guarding against this fatal evil.

1. *Watch faithfully over your speech.*

*Consider before you speak, whether what you are about to say is true, right, kind, and useful;* or false, unkind, and mischievous; and determine to utter nothing until you are satisfied. *Steadily resist a propensity to talk much,* remembering that *in a multitude of words there wanteth not sin;* and never speak at all, unless some good purpose be answered, unless some useful information be given, some innocent pleasure communicated, or some other lawful end accomplished.

*Resist a disposition to give characters, to recite family-news, to expose private failings, and to ridicule personal imperfections.* Ask yourselves, whether you would be willing that your own failings should be published, repeated, and ridiculed. Remember, that others thus attacked will feel as you would feel; and that, as you would resent such a base intrusion on your peace, so they, when in the same manner wounded by you, will become your enemies, and will sooner or later find an opportunity of making you feel their resentment. Remember farther, that even those who hear and applaud what you say, may yet and often do despise you for saying it, that they will ever afterward regard you with

suspicion, shun you as dangerous to their safety, and characterize you as nuisances to society. In this manner, before you are aware, your characters will become odious, and your reputation be lost.

*When you repeat any thing, strive to repeat it exactly.* Neither enhance nor lessen. Colour nothing beyond the strict truth. Recite that and that only which you believe, and express no more confidence in what you recite than you really feel. Recite also so much of the circumstances, drift, and tendency, of the transaction which is your subject, as fairly to explain its true nature, and the real character and conduct of those who were concerned.

*Refrain from speaking when you are in a passion.* All passionate words are dangerous and sinful. The wisest and most guarded persons, when provoked, utter at times things which they regret ever afterward. *Moses,* the meekest of all men, when provoked at *Meribah, spoke unadvisedly with his lips,* and was forbidden to enter the land of promise.

*Guard especially against making promises in a passion.* Such promises will often involve you in serious difficulties, and prove snares and traps to your feet. You will feel a strong reluctance to fulfil and powerful temptations to break them; temptations which frequently overcome vigorous resolutions, subvert established reputation, and lead their miserable victims fatally astray.

Many persons, and youths more than almost any others, are prone to make rash and inconsiderate promises. Few propensities are more unhappy than this, or conduct men to more bitter consequences. Universally resolve to make no promise when it can fairly be avoided. When it cannot, guard it with such conditions as shall render it certainly safe. Consider particularly, whether you possess the means of a faithful performance; if not, make no promises. In this manner you will escape the most dangerous temptations to falsehood, and the most alarming exposures to shame and ruin.

2. *Fix in your minds the most solemn resolution to speak truth only.*

Call to mind daily the immense advantages of truth, and the immense evils of falsehood. These advantages

resolve to acquire; these evils determine not to suffer. Both to a considerable extent have been set before you. Ponder them deeply, and daily, as their importance deserve. *Determine, that no person shall ever have it in his power to charge you with falsehood.* Determine never to say any thing which shall enable your enemies to triumph, or force your friends to blush; to say nothing which you would be ashamed to have recorded of you; nothing which shall forbid you to look an honest man in the face; nothing which in the presence of such a man shall force your eyes, when they meet his, to labour, linger, and fall.

*Resolve firmly never to flatter any man.* Speak that which is good of others when you can; and when you cannot, speak, at least in ordinary cases, nothing. Remember, that *a flattering mouth worketh ruin* for him who flatters as well as for him who is flattered. Be able therefore with Elihu nobly to say, *Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person; neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my Maker would soon take me away.* To strengthen your resolutions, remember alway, that when you are once embarked in deceit, you are wholly afloat; will be driven you know not whither, without either compass or pilot, and will be environed by rocks and shoals threatening you unceasingly with irremediable destruction.

3. *Frequent the company of wise and good men only.*

In this society you will find temptations not spread before you, but taken away; examples which will not corrupt but strengthen you in virtue. Here you will always find honour, peace, and profit, instead of shame, anxiety, and ruin. If you will seek this society, and this only, you will be welcomed to their esteem and good offices, and will gain from their precepts and example, wisdom, truth, noble sentiments, and the most excellent conduct. These they will enforce by ten thousand motives, unthought of by licentious men, instinctively rising up to view, presented in strong lights, and exhibited with powerful persuasion. The excellence, usefulness, and glory, of virtue, they will unfold to you in many ways, of which loose men never entertain a thought, and of which you yourselves have probably not formed a conception. This divine object also they will

commend to your adoption by the charms of an amiable, honourable, and delightful example. Their sentiments you will imbibe even before you are aware. Their exalted spirit you will catch: their dignified life you will make your own.

Here you will soon learn to wonder, to be astonished, that yourselves, that any being who possesses a rational mind, could ever frequent or ever think for a moment of frequenting, the haunts of licentious men; the scenes of profaneness, gaming, fraud, and falsehood; where darkness spreads her funeral pall; where oaths and obscenity, lies and blasphemies, furnish a dreadful prelude to a more enormous perpetration of the same foul sins in the world of perdition. To exchange the society which I have recommended for these haunts, would in your own view be, to quit the splendours of a palace for the loathsome horrors of a jail; to wander from the sweets of Eden into the gloom, the chains, and the madness, of a dungeon.

4. *To strengthen yourselves in all the conduct which I have recommended, labour to fix in your minds a strong, solemn, and habitual sense of the amazing importance of speaking truth alway.*

Truth is the foundation of all virtue and of all permanent happiness. Establish this great doctrine in your minds, so that it shall never be forgotten; so that it shall be a part of your whole train of thinking, and inwoven as an habitual commanding principle in all your conduct. Bring it home to your hearts; and spurn at the thought of regarding it even with a momentary indifference.

Remember, that confidence is the foundation of all good; that unless you can confide in others, you cannot live a single day with comfort, or even with safety; that you can confide no farther than others speak truth and fulfil promises, and that universal distrust would, to yourselves and others, be universal misery; would unhinge every expectation and every hope; would annihilate all the business of intelligent beings; would set them at variance with each other, and with God; and would make the universe a solitude and a desert.

Remember, that every human concern is decided by testimony; that he who weakens it is an enemy to mankind,

and makes havoc of human happiness. Realize, that if by influence or example, you destroy or diminish the confidence of men, if you lessen the sense of the obligations to veracity, you will become pests of the universe, and foes of every intelligent being which it contains.

Call to mind, that by falsehood you will debase yourselves beyond measure, cut off all your hopes of becoming virtuous, arm your consciences against your peace, and make yourselves objects of contempt, indignation, and abhorrence.

Recollect daily, that the first step which you take in falsehood is the commencement of this boundless evil; that the way to become an abandoned liar, is to conceal truth, to equivocate, to evade, to utter sportive falsehood; to rehearse marvellous stories; to recite the tales of private history; and to colour what you recite with hues and stains mixed by yourselves. In all these things you may feel at your ease, may profess yourselves to be, and may often actually be, in sport. So is the *madman, who scatters fire-brands, arrows, and death.*

*Remember, last of all, that the time in which your lot is cast, is pre-eminently a time in which the sense of truth is weakened, and the consciousness of moral obligation to a wonderful degree forgotten.* In this day, falsehood has come forth to the public eye with her brazen front unveiled, her cheek without even a tinge, and her snaky tongue newly dipped in poison. Her professed enemies are changed into friends, her friends into worshippers. *The* whole *world wonders* after her. Afraid no longer of the contempt of society or the brand of public justice, she enters familiarly into the study of the philosopher, the hall of deliberation, and the palace of power; and dictates instructions, laws, edicts, and manifestoes, to nations. In her train, parties, princes, and nations, are proud to be enrolled. How immense then, how unceasing, how universal, is the danger to you. Awake to that danger, and feel that you are struggling for your all.

*Above all things, commit yourselves to God in prayer.* Ask him and he will make you watchful, wise, and steadfast, in your duty. Ask him, and he will teach you to love, and enable you to speak, truth only; until you arrive at

that glorious world, where truth only is spoken by its happy inhabitants, and where all its blessings are realized with increasing delight, throughout ages which know no end.

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# SERMON CXXVIII.

## NINTH COMMANDMENT.

### SLANDER.

*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*—EXOD. xx. 16.

IN the last discourse but one, I proposed to consider *falsehood under the two heads of*

*Lying*, and

*Slander.*

The former of these I have discussed at length. I shall now proceed to the consideration of the latter; and shall arrange my observations under the following heads.

I. *The nature of slander;*

II. *The modes in which it is practised;*

III. *The evils of it;* and,

IV. *Dissuasives from it.*

I. Slander may be thus defined. *It is that conduct which injuriously lessens or destroys another's reputation.*

In most cases *words* are made the vehicle of slander. It may however be accomplished without words. When we are reasonably expected to give a fair character of another, we may easily and deeply slander him by our *silence.* We may also accomplish the same purpose by our *actions;* as when we withhold our countenance from a man, who in ordinary circumstances might fairly expect to enjoy it; withdraw from him business with which he has heretofore been intrusted; or turn him out of our service without alleging

any reasons for our conduct. In these and the like cases we give such proofs of suspecting him ourselves, as to entail upon him, in greater or less degrees, the suspicion of others.

Slander is perpetrated *sometimes with design*, and *sometimes through inattention*. In the former case it is perpetrated with an intention to destroy happiness: in the latter, from indifference to it. In the former case, it springs from malice: in the latter, from that sordid insensibility to the interests of others which is little less censurable. It will be unnecessary to distinguish them any farther.

II. Slander is most frequently practised in the following modes.

1. *In direct and false aspersions.*

*The slanderer commences this malignant employment, by inventing and fabricating tales of falsehood concerning the person who is either the object of his hatred or the subject of his diversion.* To the fabricator of these tales all the subsequent mischief which arises from them is supremely chargeable.

*The second step is, the rehearsing of such stories after they have been told to us by others.* In this step we do not participate in all the guilt which is attendant on the first. But both the guilt and the mischief are often greater. The spirit with which we rehearse tales of slander, may be more malignant than that which gave birth to them, and the consequences may be incomparably worse. The inventor may have been a thoughtless, ignorant, giddy-minded man; without consideration and without character. We on the contrary may possess reputation, forecast, and a correct knowledge of human concerns: may comprehend the whole efficacy of the tale; may perceive its falsehood; and may enjoy a base pleasure in giving it the most effectual operation. Thus, although not chargeable with the guilt of fabricating falsehood, we may become much more criminal than the fabricator.

Whatever is our situation, we lend in this case our own weight to the story; and in this manner we sometimes do all, and not unfrequently most, of the mischief of which the story becomes the instrument. The inventors of such tales

are *usually* persons of no reputation; and, if reputable at first, they soon destroy their character by this very employment. Were they then disregarded, and their tales not repeated, both would sink at once into absolute contempt. But when persons of a fair character take up such stories, and soberly rehearse them, the falsehood acquires new strength, and spreads with a new and most unhappy influence. This base coin they have not indeed made; but they have passed it; and given it a currency which it could never have derived from the maker. Let no person then think himself at all justified in reciting a tale of slander by the very common indeed, but very wretched, excuse, dictated and adopted only by the coarsest and most vulgar morality, *that they heard it from others.* Guilt fastens on every traveller in this base and by-path, and at every step in his progress.

Some persons perpetrate this iniquity with designs directly malicious. Some from a busy meddling disposition, always unsatisfied unless when interfering in the concerns of others; and some from a wish to be thought extensively acquainted with private history. All these are characterized in the Scriptures by the significant names of *busy-bodies* and *tale-bearers;* and are considered there and every where else as the disturbers and pests of society. They are characterized in the most disadvantageous manner, Levit. xix. 16. *Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people; neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour.* And again, in Prov. xxvi. 20, &c. *The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds. Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out.* They are classed with the worst of mankind, 1 Pet. iv. 15, *Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or a busy-body in other men's matters.*

The character given of them in the Scriptures, is the character given of them by common sense. In every age and country, they have been objects of contempt and abhorrence. Prudent men have every where shunned them; and pointed them out to their friends and children as enemies, as gins and snares, which they were ever cautiously to spy out, and eagerly to avoid. Every company into which they enter after their character is known, feels a sudden pressure upon

its thoughts, and an alarm for its peace and safety. The aspect is changed at once. The features relaxed by ease, friendship, and confidence, are suddenly contracted and fixed. The eye quits its smile of serenity and pleasure; and settles itself in the attitude of vigilance, apprehensive and ill boding; and the conversation which sprang from the heart, reciprocated friendship and awakened delight, is chilled down in a moment into general, unmeaning observations, adopted only because they have no meaning, and because no tale of mischief can be told about them. When such a man resides in a neighbourhood, a thick cloud hangs over all its enjoyments. When he removes, it is again covered with cheerfulness and sunshine.

*With a criminality often greater we slander others, by giving accounts concerning them which are true.* No excuse is more frequently or more confidently pleaded as an ample justification of malignant stories concerning others than this, *that they are true.* The author of ill-natured tales or remarks, is not indeed chargeable in this case with the crime of falsehood. Still he may be really and eminently criminal. If the good name of our neighbour be injured, the great evil in question is done. If it be injured by *us*, the evil is done by *us*. If we have injured it with pleasure, our malevolence is real; and therefore our guilt is real. That guilt also may be as great or greater in the eye of God, than any which even we ourselves have attributed to the inventor of a slanderous story.

Be it so, that our neighbour has slipped, and that he has sinned against God; still, *if his sin remain with him*, he may repent; and his repentance may render his character better and his hopes brighter than ours. Still his talents may be employed for the benefit of himself, his family, and mankind. All this benefit, and all the comfort which he and his might enjoy, we may thus prevent and blast for ever.

My neighbour is a merchant. In a course of honest industry, he is reduced by misfortunes to failing circumstances. The fact is known to me. I publish it. His creditors, anxious to secure, as far as may be, their own property, seize upon his effects; and perhaps confine him in a prison. Thus he may be completely ruined by a story which I have

told; and a story which is true. Thus also his family are reduced to want; and see their hopes of support, education, usefulness, and comfort, finally destroyed.

Had I, with the prudence and benevolence which Christianity inspires, confined this secret within my own breast; the industry of my neighbour, his skill in business, his integrity, and the credit which he had merited and gained by these qualifications, would have enabled him to continue in trade without interruption; and probably to acquire all the necessary means of comfort and prosperity for himself and his family. These blessings I have prevented; and am chargeable with the prevention. I have not indeed told a falsehood; but I have done mischief which is incalculable, and which a falsehood in the case supposed could not have done.

Why have I done this mischief? There was no necessity that my neighbour should be injured; that his failings should be published; that his character should be lowered; that his misfortunes should be announced to the world; that the peace of his family should be wounded, their enjoyments cut off, and their hopes blasted in the bud. In all this there is no profit to me nor to mankind: nor, unless I am possessed of the spirit of a fiend, can there be any pleasure.

It is evident therefore, beyond debate, that he who tells a mischievous story, and that he who, by declaring his belief of a mischievous story told by others, lends it the credit and sanction of his own authority, are essentially and alike guilty of slander. In the conduct specified, both also are without excuse.

So long as persons of reputation will either repeat the false stories of others, invented for the purpose of lowering or destroying character; or will publish malignant truths concerning others; the peace, the good name, and the comfort, of mankind will be invaded and destroyed.

2. *Slander may be practised without inventing or repeating malignant stories, whether true or false.*

This may be done in the first place *by listening to the slanderous stories of others.*

He who listens to a story of this nature without expressing his disapprobation, declares by his conduct the strong-

est of all attestations, that he considers it as meriting his attention, and, in some degree, his belief. This belief, and even this attention, from persons of respectability, will give the slander a weight and currency which it could never have derived from the inventor. Those who see us listen in this manner will conclude of course, that the slander, in our view, has foundation and importance. Hence they will be induced both to believe and to report what otherwise they would have disregarded.

The inventor of slander derives all his consequence, and all his encouragement, from the countenance lent to him by others. But to believe is to countenance him: to listen is to countenance him. By listening to him, therefore, we give life and activity to his mischievous fabrications; and lend them most of their power to do hurt. Besides, by doing this we keep the spirit of slander alive in his breast; and make him feel secure of the consequence which he hopes to gain by this course of conduct; the consequence which is his principal motive to sin. In this manner we contribute to the existence of future slanders, and, in a manner possessed of no contemptible efficacy, aid the diffusion of calumny through the world. This nuisance to society, this pest to mankind, we sustain, cherish, and send abroad, to destroy the peace of those around us. How plainly is he who acts in this manner a nuisance to his fellow-men!

Both reason and revelation, both common sense and common good-nature, demand, on the contrary, that, whenever our neighbour's character is attacked, we should appear openly in his defence. In very few ways can we so often, or so greatly befriend others, as by supporting their good name; and in very few cases will our kindness be so deeply or so gratefully felt. The person thus attacked is absent of course; and cannot therefore defend himself. If we do not defend him; he is left naked to the attack, and to all its malignant consequences. Our silence cannot but injure him seriously. It may be the means of his ruin. Who would not wish, in such a case, to have his own character defended? Who then is not bound to defend that of another? Were this great law of righteousness duly felt; were its injunctions, as they respect the case under consideration, faithfully obeyed; what a horde of busy-bo-

dies, tale-bearers, and calumniators, would be broken down! What an endless multitude of base and snaky efforts against the peace of society, and the comfort of families, would in this way be crushed at once!

Secondly. *If our silence, when tales of slander are reported, is thus injurious to others; the declaration, that we believe them, is still more criminal.*

A multitude of persons not only suffer slander to pass without censure or opposition, but readily believe it; and without hesitation declare this belief. If they do not repeat it to others; their consciences appear to be satisfied. Even when they give it no credit, they suffer others quietly to repeat it, not only without animadversion, but without even hinting their disbelief. Through a company of such persons a calumny rolls on without an impediment; without a single generous effort to check its progress. On the contrary, it fares like a spy in a venal, mercenary army, whom none will detect, and whose escape all will favour, because all are hollow-hearted and false. If it is attended with evidence moderately plausible, they declare their belief of it; and thus help it onward to the belief of others. If it be supported by no evidence whatever, they will not declare their disbelief of it: thus suffering it to proceed without interruption, and to gain credit wherever it may.

There is in the human breast a strong propensity to censoriousness. We need no instruction to teach us, that our fellow-men are, by every censure which adheres to them, lowered beneath their customary level. Nor do we discern with less readiness, that whatever sinks those around us raises comparatively ourselves. With this self-exaltation, despicable as are the means by which it is achieved, we, whenever we become the authors of it, are despicable enough to be gratified: and the gratification, base and contemptible as it is, is still eagerly sought, and highly enjoyed, by many such minds as are found in the present world.

When these persons hear the characters of others aspersed, they hear it with pleasure; and with pleasure believe the aspersion. Their faith here is not given to evidence: it does not wait for evidence. If evidence be furnished indeed, it is so much the better; because it is ex-

pected to command the faith of others also. But no evidence is necessary to ensure the faith of these persons. The tale pleases, because it involves the degradation of a neighbour; a rival; a superior; or some other object of jealousy. It is believed, because they wish it to be true. Still many such persons are too cautious to rehearse it again; and with their avoidance of this additional injury, their cold, heartless consciences are satisfied.

III. *The evils of slander are either personal or public.*

1. *The personal evils of slander,* by which I intend the sufferings experienced from it by individuals, *are, the pain felt, and the injuries derived, from the loss of a good name.*

A good name is, *the estimation in which we are holden by others on account of our good qualities, and our good conduct.* Such a name is declared by God himself to be *better than precious ointment.* Eccles. vii. 1. And in Proverbs xxii. 1, *a good name is* said to be *better than great riches and loving-favour,* that is, the favourable emotions exercised towards such as possess a good name, better *than silver and gold. Silver and gold,* particularly when possessed in such accumulations as constitute *great riches,* are proverbially the supreme objects which this world furnishes of human desires. As such they are customarily used as objects of comparison, to illustrate the value of things eminently precious. Thus, in the Scriptures themselves, we are informed, *that the law of the Lord is more to be chosen than the most fine gold.* Thus also Job says of the wisdom which is the obedience of that law, that *it cannot be gotten for gold; neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.*

*Precious ointment,* as intended by a Jewish writer, probably denotes that which was used to anoint the high-priest and the kings of the Jewish nation. The materials of which it was composed are well known to have been pre-eminently costly and valuable; far more so than the most fine gold. In this point of view, precious ointment was in the mouth of an Israelite perhaps the strongest conceivable illustration of the value of a good name. At the same time this unguent, being composed of the richest and most elegant aromatic substances, diffused extensively the most

delightful fragrance wherever it was employed. With reference to this fine character, the Psalmist adopts it as a charming illustration of one of the most charming objects ever seen in the present world. *Behold*, he exclaims, *how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head of Aaron, that went down to the skirts of his garment; as the dew of Hermon, that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing; even life for evermore.* A more exquisite illustration of the delightful impression made by a fair character could not be given.

Such a character is of inestimable value to the possessor, if considered merely *as a source of enjoyment*. The esteem of our fellow-men is probably regarded by the great body of mankind, as standing in the list of enjoyments next to self-approbation. Common sense as well as the Scriptures pronounces *loving favour to be better than silver and gold*. The opinion of wise and good men may be considered, in all ordinary cases, as the best criterion of worth on this side of the grave; and their good-will, which always accompanies their esteem, as the richest possession which does not descend immediately from heaven. Even in that happy world, the uninterrupted and intense complacency of its glorious inhabitants will, after the favour of God, and the peace of a self-approving mind, constitute the prime ingredient of eternal joy.

In the world of misery, on the contrary, all the inhabitants, being destitute of all good character in the eyes of each other, will be the subjects of perpetual shame, and the objects of mutual and everlasting contempt. These ingredients of suffering, so terrible even in the present world, will there become the means of inexpressible woe. They will be despised by themselves; they will be despised by each other; they will be objects of abhorrence to God, and to the whole virtuous universe. The anguish inflicted by this engine of torture so completely in that melancholy world, is often excruciating in this. In how many instances has the consciousness of contempt, even from a single person, driven its miserable victim to suicide!

Nor is a good name less indispensable *to the attainment of confidence, and of all the blessings by which confidence is*

*followed.* If we are unpossessed of a fair character, no one will confide in us. Without confidence, beside losing the serene and high enjoyment which it communicates, we shall be prevented from all useful employment, and from all the benefits which would flow from such employment to ourselves, and through us to others.

A fair character is also essential *to personal usefulness.* A man destitute of reputation, is of course destitute of influence: and virtuous influence is the principal means of usefulness. The good which we can individually do must never be small: that which we may influence others to do can be very great. If we are destitute of this instrument of beneficence, we can never persuade others to unite with us in any valuable purpose; and must on every occasion, however important, stand alone. Our talents are thus in a great measure rendered useless; and our power of contributing to the welfare of our fellow-men, and promoting the cause of righteousness, is shrunk and withered.

*In the loss of our reputation also, and in all its miserable consequences, our connexions necessarily partake; particularly our friends and our families.* Whoever wishes well to the sufferer feels the wound. Thus the evils, instead of being suffered by *us* only, are felt by *multitudes;* and often with anguish not inferior to our own.

Whenever the persons whose character is thus injured are in public stations, or are otherwise possessed of superior consequence; the mischief becomes more extensive, and more important. Thus a slander directed against a minister of the gospel, is a wound to the church; a calumny branded upon a magistrate of distinction, is felt by the whole community.

Finally. The loss of reputation, both in itself, and especially in its consequences; the prevention of confidence, employment, and usefulness; *brings with it a multitude of temptations, and prepares the mind for a ready perpetration of sin, in every form, and extending to every degree.* Regard to character is a powerful motive to every species of good conduct; and when duly felt, is an evangelical motive. *Whatsoever things are honest, lovely, and of good report,* St. Paul enjoins upon Christians as their duty. *A bishop* also, the same apostle teaches us, *must have a good report*

*of them who are without* the church, as one indispensable qualification for his election to the ministry of the gospel. Those who were without the church, when this was written, were Jews and Heathen. Yet even among these men, a bishop was required to sustain an unblemished reputation. Danger to character is also a prime restraint from all open wickedness, a restraint felt by every decent man every day of his life. He who is unconscious of it, has already become almost desperate. He who discovers that he disregards it, will be pronounced by his fellow-men abandoned.

In accordance with these observations, the Scriptures have solemnly guarded personal reputation in various ways. They have taught the high value of a good name; declared the guilt and odiousness of slander and tale-bearing; prohibited strongly the practice of these crimes; and threatened the perpetrators with exemplary punishment. Municipal law also has hedged the private character of every man with a strong enclosure; and denounced against every trespasser heavy penalties.

From these considerations it is manifest, that the mischiefs involved in the loss of reputation, are to individuals incomprehensibly great. Rarely does the thief, or the cheat, rob his fellow-men of *great riches*. The slanderer, therefore, accomplishes a greater injury than either of these villains; for *a good name is better than great riches*. It is of no consequence whether his efforts succeed or not. The thief is not the less a thief because he drops his booty; nor the cheat the less a cheat because he is detected in his fraud. If then the slanderer is not more despised and abhorred than either, it is because reputation is not esteemed according to its value.

2. *The public evils of slander are too numerous to permit, and too obvious to need, a discussion in this place.*

I have already remarked, that when persons of consequence are attacked by calumny, the mischief is extensively spread. The slandering of private individuals is capable also of extending far, and of harassing not a little the peace of society. There is in many places a kind of indulgence often given to that pestilential class of mankind, the retailers of private history. In villages, precluded by their size or their situation from being theatres of pub-

lic news, a strong propensity is often discovered to listen to those who employ their time in prying into the private concerns of their neighbours. Encouraged by this kind of approbation, as well as urged onward by restless curiosity, and an eager spirit of meddling, persons of this description multiply without number their suspicions, their inuendoes, their predictions of evil, and their tales of mischief. Speedily, jealousies are excited between neigbour and neighbour, between friend and friend. Speedily, the offices of good-will and good neighbourhood are withdrawn. Social visits are interdicted. Kindness, both in opinion and in conduct, ceases: and a village, in which peace and good order have long prevailed, is thrown into an uproar. The general conversation is made up of ridicule, invective, and threatening; and a quiet life gives place to quarrels and litigations. Even in the house of God, the inhabitants find themselves scarcely able to unite with each other in the worship of their Maker.

But the spirit of slander is not confined to villages, nor towns, nor cities. It often flies at higher objects; and boldly intrudes upon the hall of justice, the senate-house, and the chair of state. No life is too spotless, no character is too sacred, to be assaulted and destroyed by this evil genius of man. A single calumny, especially in seasons of violent party, has set a nation in a flame; and for a season consumed its peace, and wasted its prosperity. The evils suffered in this case are numberless and incomprehensible. One of the chief sources of the unprecedented crimes and sufferings attendant upon the French revolution, was the slander of distinguished men, both in public and private life. Misrepresentation and obloquy have been more fatal enemies to the cause of Christianity, than the fagot and the rack.

IV. *Among the dissuasives from this sin, I shall briefly suggest the following.*

1. *It is eminently odious in the sight of God.*

The great body of slanderers are liars; and are therefore chargeable with all the gross wickedness attributed to men of this character, and exposed to all the awful threatenings denounced against them in the Scriptures. *Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour,* says David under the guid-

ance of the Spirit of truth, directing his duty as the ruler of Israel, *him will I cut off.* In that kingdom, therefore, this crime was made capital by a divine decision. The slanderer also, and that when he is not as well as when he is the inventor of a false calumny, is, in the fifteenth psalm, excluded from the favourable presence of God. *Lord,* saith the Psalmist, *who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill?* One answer to this inquiry is the following. *He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.*

2. *Every person guilty of this sin, exposes himself also to the hatred and contempt of mankind.*

A slanderer is a common enemy. All considerate persons know and feel this truth; and guard themselves with watchful care against his attacks. So far as their circumstances will permit, they shun and warn their children and friends to shun his company. Not mere suspicion, but a well-founded and deeply felt conviction of his hostility to the common interests of men, meets him wherever he goes. His presence creates only pain. His tongue is a blast upon human comfort; and his name is an additional spot upon the human character.

No member of this audience, I presume, feels that he is prepared to encounter an evil of this magnitude. It is a terrible consideration, that mankind are less afraid to offend their God, than to provoke the resentment of their fellowmen. Still it furnishes some consolation, that the dread of public odium and contempt, is a powerful hinderance of open iniquity, and a forcible restraint upon evil dispositions. If any individual present feels adventurous enough to hazard this evil, or is indifferent about it; let him recollect with what agitation he has sustained even slight attacks upon his character; how tremblingly apprehensive he has been, lest a few, or even one of those around him, should believe the calumny, and lest he should be regarded with hatred and contempt, on a speck of earth, and by a handful of mankind. If he could not sustain this shock; how unprepared must he be to meet the common assault of the human race! How must he shrink, and falter, and fall, when indignation burns against him in every breast; contempt flashes on him from every eye; and a sentence of

final condemnation is pronounced on him by every tongue? How will he bear to be shunned by all decent society; pointed at by the finger of prudence, as well as of scorn, and hissed, wherever he appears, not by vulgarity, ill-nature, and enmity only, but by decency, delicacy, and common sense! How will he bear to spend his days in a kind of solitude, in the midst of mankind; to be welcomed cordially to no man's bosom; to be regarded as a public nuisance; to be suspected and dreaded; and to have his presence regarded as a burden, and his character as a brand upon the human race! Especially, how will he bear all this, and feel at the same time, that in all this no injustice is done to him; since he has merited it all by his own vile and infamous conduct!

3. *The immense mischiefs occasioned by slander, ought to deter every man who has not, and to stop every man who has, entered upon his guilty career.*

There are persons to whom I shall scarcely think of addressing this consideration. But to this audience it may surely be addressed with success. It cannot for a moment be admitted, even with decency, that those who are before me can be indifferent to the thought of doing such mischiefs to their fellow-men. Think what it will be to stab the character, to destroy the peace and the usefulness, even of one of your fellow-creatures. Remember how tenderly you regard your own reputation; how deeply you have been pierced, even by the darts of ridicule; how suddenly you have shrunk from the eye of scorn; and how you have trembled under a tale of slander, or a foul aspersion. Remember, that others have their feelings also. Remember, that reputation is to *them* as dear; calumny as unwelcome; contempt as oppressive; and disgrace as full of anguish; as to *you*. Then ask yourselves, whether you can consent to be the authors of these evils.

All this, however, is only the first stage of the mischiefs which you will accomplish. Extend your views from individuals to families. How much happiness in these little delightful circles, is often destroyed by a single calumnious tale! How often are the hearts of parents broken, and the peace of their children destroyed, by false imputations of dishonesty to a son, or impurity to a daughter! How often

is the domestic groupe clustered together with terror and anguish, by false charges upon the good name of a parent! Before they were happy. Why are they not happy now? Because a fiend, in the shape and with the tongue of a man, has blasted all their enjoyments.

But the mischiefs do not stop here. Families are set at variance with each other; friends are converted into enemies; and neighbours into strangers. Harmony, hospitality, and peace, sicken and die before the foul breath of slander. Every office of kindness is interrupted: and the spirit of Christianity itself, amazed, perplexed, bewildered, looks around in vain, or almost in vain, to find proper objects of its beneficence, and means and modes of administering it with success. To the happiness of good neighbourhood, succeeds a train of grovelling, base, serpentine hostilities; depraving all who practise them, and distressing all against whom they are practised. Anxiety and dismay haunt every fire-side; and a funeral gloom settles upon every prospect, and broods over every hope.

4. *The slanderer ought to be deterred from his purpose by the incalculable mischiefs which he will do to himself.*

It cannot be supposed that, in such a course of hostilities against his fellow-men, the slanderer will escape from the common resentment of those whom he has injured. As he is an enemy to all men; all men become at length enemies to him. Such as have smarted severely from his tongue, will usually take effectual care to make him smart in his turn. The vengeance executed upon him will often be exemplary. Sometimes he will be chastised. Sometimes he will be prosecuted. Sometimes he will be excluded from all decent society: and often, if not always, he will be openly insulted with indignities, which he knows not how to brook, and yet dares not resist. The consciousness of his guilt will make him a coward: while a painful conviction, that his sufferings are a mere and just retribution of his crimes, will point every sting, and give a double force to every blow.

Still more ought he to be alarmed at the certain prospect of depraving himself. Slander is a compound of falsehood, injustice, unkindness, and meanness; forming in itself a character eminently depraved. What is so unhappily

begun, proceeds with a rapid and dreadful declension. All the designs which he forms in the indulgance of this characteristical propensity; all the measures which he feels obliged to employ; all the instruments which he can summon to his assistance; all the gratification which he can experience in his success; are such, and such only, as contribute to shrink, debase, and pollute, his mind. In such a soil, a noble generous thought would instantly wither. To such a bosom honourable friendship cannot approach. At the door of such a heart, Christianity knocks for admittance in vain. His career is the career of abandonment only, through a path of steep and rapid descent, *going down to the chambers of death.*

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# SERMON CXXIX.

## TENTH COMMANDMENT.

### CONTENTMENT.

*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.*—EXOD. XX. 17.

THE preceding precepts of the decalogue, so far as the language in which they are written is concerned, are apparently intended to regulate chiefly the *external* conduct of mankind. Had they not been explained by the prophets who followed Moses, and still more by our Saviour and his apostles, plausible reasons might be alleged, why all of them, even the fourth, might be satisfied by external observances. But the precept in the text is directed immediately and only *to the heart;* and is intended supremely to control the disposition. The propensity forbidden in it is *covetousness:* an inordinate desire of worldly enjoyments; and particu-

larly an inordinate desire of such enjoyments when in the possession of others. We may lawfully desire the enjoyments furnished by this world; and that even when they belong to our fellow-men; if the desire is confined within due bounds. We may desire lawfully the lands and houses of others, when *they* are willing to part with them, and *we* are equally willing to purchase them at an equitable price. We may lawfully wish to obtain any share of worldly good with which God may crown our honest and industrious efforts, and which we may be prepared to enjoy with a spirit of gratitude, beneficence, and moderation. *I know*, says Solomon, *that there is no good in them* (that is, in the creatures which God has made in this world, or the things created here), *but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life; and also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour: it is the gift of God.*

*An inordinate desire of natural good seems, in the order of things, to be the commencement of sin in a virtuous being.* Our first parents began their apostacy by coveting the forbidden fruit as an enjoyment, and wishing to become *as gods, knowing good and evil.* In this disposition seem naturally to be involved, ambition, avarice, and voluptuous wishes for its attainment: and out of it to spring, as consequences, pride, vanity, and criminal sensuality, in its enjoyments; envy towards those who possess more of it than ourselves; anger and malice towards those who hinder us from acquiring it; revenge towards those who have deprived us of it; falsehood as the means of achieving and securing it; forgetfulness, and therefore ingratitude, with respect to such as give it; and impiety, and consequent rebellion, repining, and profaneness, towards him from whom we receive less of it, than our unreasonable wishes demand. In a word, to this disposition may be traced, with no great difficulty, most if not all of the sins committed by mankind. The text therefore appears to be levelled at the root of bitterness; at a sinful disposition in its original form, and in the very commencement of its existence. If we obey this precept with the heart; and it cannot otherwise be obeyed; that obedience will immediately fulfil all the demands of the other precepts belonging to the second table, or those regulating our duty to mankind; and consequentially will

fulfil those of the first. The tenth command therefore may be regarded as, in an extensive sense, a summary of our duty.

This command directly prohibits *coveting;* or, in other words, *ambition, avarice,* and *voluptuous desires.* Of course it requires universally, *contentment,* and, by easy implication, charity. Of consequence also it forbids *discontentment* and *envy. Contentment,* the virtue required in this precept, shall be the principal subject of the present discourse. With this subject I shall connect some observations concerning *discontentment and envy.* Concerning *voluptuous desires* I shall not here enter into any discussion.

In examining this subject I shall

I. *Describe the nature;* and,

II. *Mention the benefits; of contentment.*

The *nature* of contentment has been very often misapprehended. Persons often suppose themselves to be contented when they are merely *gay* or *glad;* when a native or accidental sprightliness of mind excludes sorrow and gloom; or when a multiplicity of enjoyments, the gratification of a darling wish, or the success of a favourite enterprise, or the arrival of some unexpected benefit, fills the heart with pleasure. Others mistake *indifference* and *phlegm* for contentment: and others still that kind of *dull equanimity,* which springs from uniform, grave, and spiritless, employments; destroying all the elasticity of the mind, and settling it down in an immoveable stagnation. The contentment which is the object of this precept, differs radically from all these dispositions. A man may be gay or glad, and yet be totally destitute of this virtue. His natural disposition may incline him to flutter from one amusement to another, without suffering him to settle seriously upon any. Still the disposition which he mistakes for contentment, is only sportiveness. But no man will mistrust that sportiveness is the disposition required by this precept. A man may be greatly delighted with his present enjoyments. But no person beside himself will mistake his pleasure for contentment: and a reverse of fortune may convince even him, that there is a wide difference between

these two states of mind. Much less can the other attributes, which I have mentioned, lay a claim to this title. There is nothing excellent nor amiable in being merely grave, insensible to sufferings, or indifferent about them.

The *words used in the Scriptures to denote contentment, involve*, as one of their significations, the *restraining of ourselves*; and, as another, *the supporting of such burdens as are incumbent on us*. It includes therefore the supposition, that the contented person is placed in circumstances which demand the restraint of his inclinations, and the sustentation of difficulties. Such plainly are the circumstances of every being who can, with strict propriety, be said to be contented. To say, *that an angel was contented*, would certainly be incorrect phraseology. *An angel is happy*; all his circumstances being completely gratifying to his desires. *A man* whom many troubles befal, and many burdens press, *may*, by steadily restraining his inclinations to murmur at the former, and serenely supporting the latter, *be contented*. Such is always the situation of man upon the whole. He is never, for any length of time, in a situation entirely agreeable to him. On the contrary, he is always required, in some degree, and at short intervals, to suffer. If he possess a contented spirit, he will suffer with quietness and serenity.

Having premised these general remarks, I observe, that *evangelical contentment*, the object of the command in the text, *involves*

1. *A fixed belief of the reality and excellency of the divine government.*

The divine government is, throughout the Scriptures, made the foundation of every delightful, and even every comfortable, thought. This scheme is perfectly accordant with the dictates of reason. Both the views and prospects of the Atheist, as I have heretofore shewn at large,* are gloomy and desolate, full of perplexity and discouragement, and destitute alike of comfort and hope. *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice*—is a declaration and a precept founded on it, which a very limited understanding will shew us to be just; and a very moderate degree of rectitude incline us to obey.

* See Sermon [illegible]

It is not however sufficient to ensure our obedience, however well disposed, that we believe in the superintendence of *some* all-controlling agent. It is the government of JEHOVAH, in which we are required to rejoice; the result of the wisdom, power, and goodness, which constitute the perfect character of this glorious being. No man can be contented who does not believe, that the administration by which all his own interests, both personal and social, are ultimately to be decided, is both just and benevolent. The state of things with which we are immediately concerned, is mysterious and distressing. The mysteries we cannot unravel: the distresses we often find it difficult to bear. Both united must frequently be insupportable, unless we could confide in the wisdom and goodness of him who controls the universe, as furnishing sufficient assurance that they are right and good in themselves, and will in the end be shewn to be right and good. The reality and excellence of the divine government therefore, must indispensably be objects of a steady faith to a contented mind.

2. *Contentment involves an humble hope, generally existing, that we are interested in the divine favour.*

We suffer many evils in the present world. Philosophy bids us suffer them with firmness; since they cannot be avoided; and since impatience and sinking under them will only make them heavier. I am not disposed to deny the prudence, or even the propriety, of this precept. It may be, it usually is, true, that we lessen the degree of our sufferings, by resolving finally to endure them. But it is equally true, that the immoveable nature of evils is no cause of contentment. On the contrary, it is always the most distressing consideration which can attend them. This, however, is the only support which philosophy can give to the sufferer.

No motive can rationally make us willing to suffer. There is no virtue in suffering evil for its own sake. All rational submission to evil arises from the consideration, that God wills us to suffer, as the proper reward of our sins, and as the means of promoting his glory, and the good of ourselves or others; of others alway, and of ourselves, if we do not prevent it by our disobedience to his pleasure. This motive to contentment, Christianity holds out to its disciples invariably, by pointing their attention and their faith to

the government of God. The hope of an interest in his favour Christianity also regularly inspires, by presenting to them all the promises of infinite mercy through the mediation of Christ. Without such a hope, the ills of life would often overcome the equanimity of such minds as ours. The outcast would be feebly supported by an assurance, that he could obtain no relief for his sufferings; and the martyr by being told, that his flames could not be extinguished. In the hope of the divine mercy, a remedy is found for every present evil; and he who exercises it will naturally summon all his powers to sustain, with serenity, distresses which, although grievous for the present, will operate as the means, and terminate in the enjoyment, of everlasting good.

3. *Contentment involves a conviction, that it is both our duty and our interest to acquiesce in the divine dispensations.*

With the dispositions already mentioned, it may be regarded as a thing of course, that such a conviction will prevail in the mind. If God is the universal ruler, if his government is the result of infinite excellence; if what he does, or permits to be done, is right in itself, and will hereafter appear to be right; if we are furnished with an humble hope of an interest in his favour; then, however mysterious and perplexing the events of Divine Providence may be, and however distressing to *us*, we still shall see and feel abundant reason to be satisfied. We shall readily admit, that the most untoward events, the most difficult to be reconciled with our apprehensions of wisdom and goodness, are difficult only in the view of creatures whose minds are limited like ours. We shall believe, that they are perplexing, only because we cannot explain them; that they seem wrong, only because we cannot understand them. With such views, we shall cheerfully resign the government of the universe into the hands of its Maker, and wait for the removal of our own perplexities, until the day when *the mystery shall be finished*, when God shall appear just in judging, and clear even in condemning.

4. *Contentment implies a cordial acknowledgment, that we are unworthy of the mercies which we receive.*

There are in the present world many afflictions. If we

are guiltless beings, our sufferance of them must be unmerited; and the communication of them to us by our Creator is irreconcilable with all our ideas of equity. If we admit God to be just, we are obliged also to admit that ourselves are sinners. If we are not sinners, but are unjustly distressed, there is no reason why we should be contented with our situation. No being can be bound to be contented with injustice. But if we are sinners, we can have no claim to any favour. If we are conscious that we are sinners, we shall see that we have no such claim. We shall see, that however small our blessings may appear, God *hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Enjoyments, in the view of a mind thus attempered, will all appear to be mere gifts of sovereign goodness, mere emanations of benevolence, to a being destitute of any claim to the favour of God. Without such views, seated in the heart, and controlling its affections, it appears to me impossible that such a being as man should be contented.

5. *Contentment involves a disposition steadily to mark the daily mercies of God.*

The great body of mankind seem to regard their enjoyments either as things of course, or as acquisitions made by their own ingenuity and efforts. With such views it seems impossible that they should consider them as blessings. Their afflictions, on the contrary, they appear to consider as mere hardships: partly as injuries done to them by their fellow-men, and partly as vexations and unlucky events, brought upon them by, they know not what, untoward chance, or evil destiny. Accordingly, in their hours of complaining, they customarily pronounce themselves to be ill-starred; unlucky; unfortunate; persecuted by ill-fortune; plagued; and harassed; and, what is very remarkable, never speak of themselves as chastised or afflicted by God. According to their own account, their enjoyments are accidents and acquisitions, not blessings; and their sufferings are calamities; not judgments of God.

Multitudes also, who do not go all this length, suffer the mercies which they daily receive, and these both invaluable and numberless, to pass by them in a great measure unregarded. Converse with these men on this subject; and they

will readily acknowledge, that all their enjoyments are gifts of God, and in no sense merited by themselves. Still, from their ordinary conversation and conduct, it is evident that such acknowedgments are no part of the current state of their minds. From their obvious indifference, from their regardless inattention, amid the common and most necessary blessings of life, it is undeniably certain, that they are scarcely conscious even of the existence, much less of the source, of these blessings. Were these persons to number their enjoyments, they would be astonished to find their amount. Were they to estimate them, they would be equally astonished to perceive their value. Were they to examine their own character, they would be amazed, that blessings of such value, and of such an amount, were bestowed on themselves.

The man who actually adopts this conduct, will soon discern, in the importance and number of his enjoyments, and in his own undeserving character, ample reasons, not only for being satisfied, but also for being grateful. On the one hand, he will admire that divine goodness which is manifested to him every hour in so many forms ; and will wonder, on the other, that it should be manifested to so guilty and undeserving a creature. So long as we do not perceive these facts, and unless we mark them we shall not perceive them, it seems impossible that we should possess a contented spirit.

6. *Contentment involves the moderation of those desires which are directed to worldly enjoyments.*

There are two modes in which mankind seek happiness; *Indulging their wishes, and seeking to find objects sufficient in their nature and number to gratify them ; and confining their wishes by choice and system to a moderate number of objects, and thus preparing themselves to find their enjoyment in such objects, as in the ordinary course of things they may rationally expect to obtain.* The former of these modes is generally pursued by mankind. Still it is palpably unwise ; full of danger ; and regularly attended by disappointment, mortification, and distress. Every man who adopts it will be compelled to learn, that the state of this world is altogether unsuited to satisfy numerous and eager desires The enjoyments which it furnishes are comparatively few

and small. They are incapable, therefore, of fulfilling the demands of numerous and extensive desires. At the same time, he will find his desires enlarging incomparably more, and increasing incomparably faster, than their gratifications. A rich man covets property with far more greediness than the possessor of moderate wealth. He who has entered the chase for fame, power, or pleasure, will find his wishes become more vehement, as well as more expanded, by every new instance of success; and will soon perceive, that, what he once thought to be sufficient good, has ceased to be good at all. If he gains all that he pursues, he will, therefore, be continually less and less satisfied; and, while *he snatches on the right hand, and devours on the left,* he will still *be hungry* in the midst of his gluttony and plunder.

Incomparably more wise and hopeful is the latter of these modes. The wishes which are directed to worldly enjoyments can be controlled, to an indefinite degree, by reason, firmness, and regular preconcertion. In this case, the mind, demanding only moderate enjoyments, may ordinarily be in a good measure satisfied; for moderate enjoyments not only exist in our present state, but are commonly attainable, without much difficulty, by the great body of mankind. Our wishes, in this case, are suited to our circumstances. As therefore our enjoyment is commensurate to the satisfaction of our wishes; so, when our wishes are moderate, the moderate enjoyments, which this world supplies, will furnish us with sufficient gratification.

Without this moderation of our desires, contentment cannot exist. An eager pursuit of earthly good would make an angel discontented. Vehement desires ungratified are sure and copious sources of misery. The demands of enjoyment in the mind which cherishes them, are too high to be satisfied by any thing which this world has to give. The mind seeks for enjoyment, not with the spirit of a rational, industrious man, but with that of a miser; and cries unceasingly, "*Give, give;*" but whatever may be its acquisitions, is never sufficiently satisfied to be able to say, "*It is enough.*"

7. *Contentment involves self-approbation.*

All enjoyment commences in the state of the mind itself. When that is disturbed, no external gratifications can be

relished or regarded. No seasoning, no daintiness, will enable him who is languishing under a fever, to relish even the choicest viands. But to ease of mind, self-approbation is indispensable. Unless the conscience approve and smile, serenity can never overspread the world within. So long as the conscience reproaches, wounds, and terrifies; the soul must be perturbed, restless, and unhappy. That contentment should exist in such a mind, can neither be proper nor possible. But, whenever the man begins to submit to be controlled by his conscience, he begins to be approved by himself. The tumult of the soul then begins to subside: the storm ceases to lower and to threaten: the violence of the blast is hushed: the angry clouds disperse. A summer-evening overspreads the soul; calm, serene, bright; the promise of a future, peaceful, and delightful day.

II. *I shall now briefly mention some of the benefits of contentment.*

1. *This disposition of mind secures to us the favour of God.*

The preceding observations make it evident, that contentment is, in an extensive sense, obedience to the divine will. It is also, directly and repeatedly, commanded in the Scriptures. To Timothy, St. Paul writes, *Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.* To the Hebrews he says universally, *Be content with such things as ye have.* This injunction he also enforces by the best of all reasons; viz. *that God hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.* That God is pleased with obedience to his commands, needs no illustration. Equally unnecessary would be an attempt to shew, that a state of mind, formed as contentment obviously is, chiefly of faith, submission, humility gratitude, and self-government, must be obedience eminently acceptable. But him whom God approves he will bless. The promises of the divine favour to such as cordially obey the divine will, are spread every where throughout the Scriptures; and not one of them will fail of being accomplished. But the favour of God is the sum of all benefits, and the source whence every other proceeds. Contentment begins with a hope of the divine favour; and,

as a continued course of obedience to the commands of God, originates unceasingly new hopes, and makes sure of new communications of the same invaluable blessing.

2. *Contentment enables him who possesses it, to perform his duty with more exactness and more pleasure than he can otherwise attain.*

The contented mind is unencumbered by many cares and many hinderances which usually obstruct and retard men in the performance of their duty. The serenity of its disposition leaves it at full leisure calmly to examine, and therefore clearly to understand and thoroughly to feel, the nature, direction, and amount, of its duty. Satisfied with the divine dispensations, and assured of the approbation of him whose dispensations they are, it is prepared beforehand to accord with their tenor, and to perform whatever they may require. In this case, its obedience obviously becomes easy, cheerful, and of course delightful; as well as uniform and exact. It is the punctilious and cheerful obedience of a *child;* compared with which the occasional and reluctant performances of a discontented man are merely the mercenary drudgery of an unfaithful *servant.* But to perform our duty with pleasure, is to lead a life of enjoyment; for our duty returns every moment of our lives. To perform our duty also with exactness, is not only delightful in itself; but is a continual source of self-approbation and peace; and the only source whence these blessings can be derived.

3. *The man in whom this spirit prevails, is secured from many temptations and many sins to which others are exposed.*

*A discontented man* naturally indulges, and is always liable to, the sin of murmuring against God, arraigning his justice, wisdom, and goodness, and hardening his heart against his mercy; because he is impatient under his own allotments, and unwilling to accord with any proposals from a being, whose character he disrelishes, and whose conduct he regards as the source of his troubles. *The envious man* is prompted by his ruling disposition to repine at the blessings of others, to accuse God of partiality in bestowing them, to wish them lessened, to resort not unfrequently to active, insidious, and malignant exertions for

the purpose of lessening them, and to exercise a kind of infernal joy when they are taken away. Such a man turns a gloomy, misanthropic eye on all those who he thinks are richer, greater, wiser, or happier, than himself. From these rebellious and fiend-like dispositions, from the temptations which they create, and the sins to which they lead, the contented mind is delightfully free. Satisfied with its own lot, it feels no anxiety, mortification, or opposition, to its Maker, because others are possessed of superior good. Particularly, it is undisturbed by the sight of superior wealth in the possession of others; of superior power, pleasures, reputation, and influence. On all these splendours it can look, as the eagle on the sun, with a steady and serene eye; and can find its happiness not lessened, but increased, because others are happy. The disposal, both of its own concerns and theirs, it is willing to leave wholly to God; and prepared to enjoy any good which he is pleased to bestow, whoever may be the recipient. Thus,

4. *It is a disposition eminently peaceful and comfortable.*

On the one hand, it is preserved from many troubles suffered by others: and on the other, finds many pleasures which others never know. The distress experienced in an unceasing course of disappointments, by all discontented, covetous, and ambitious men, is chiefly unknown to him who has acquired this delightful spirit. Equally free is he also from the pain of ungratified desires, and from continual fears that his desires will be ungratified. Nor is he less secure from that complication of woe which springs incessantly from distrust of the goodness and faithfulness of God; from murmuring against his providence; from reluctance to obey his pleasure; and from the consciousness of not having faithfully obeyed at all. At the same time, he is delivered from those fears of future woe which so often harass the minds of guilty men.

It is not here intended to insinuate, that the contented man is free from afflictions: but that he is comparatively free from them is unquestionable. Contentment will not remove the thorns and briers spread over this unhappy world by the apostacy, and renew upon its face the bloom, the beauty, and the fragrance, of Eden. But it will blunt

the point of many a thorn, and convert many a wilderness into a fruitful field. The sorrows which it feels, will be all allayed by the remembrance, that they come from the hand of the Infinitely Good; and by the hope that they will all terminate in the promotion of its own best interests. To the blast of calamity also it yields, like the willow; and is therefore not rooted up and destroyed. In the mean time, whenever troubles arrive, however numerous or great they may be, their distressing efficacy is always allayed by the soothing balmy influence of peace and self-approbation.

This delightful influence also is regularly diffused over every enjoyment. The enjoyments of the contented man are, in his view, all gifts and blessings; not acquisitions made by his own ingenuity and efforts. As gifts, they are relished with gratitude to their glorious Author. The light in which they are seen by this grateful disposition, is always glossy and brilliant; and the taste which they furnish, is singularly sweet. Thus the contented man finds pleasures, where others find only troubles. Thus when troubles arrest him, their bitterness is allayed; and thus all the pleasures which he finds, are enhanced by his own happy disposition. Even in seasons when darkness overspreads the world, and such seasons it must be acknowledged there are, when the gloom overshadows *his* mind, as well as the minds of *those around him;* and when the face of the Sun of righteousness is eclipsed to the eyes of mankind, hope, humble and serene, will lift up her exploring eye, and behold the divine luminary still visible, and environing the intervening darkness with a circle of glory.

5. *Contentment renders its possessor eminently pleasing and comfortable to others.*

Uniform serenity, cheerfulness, and sweetness of disposition, constitute that character in man, which to his fellowmen is more agreeable than any other. Religion itself, however pious and benevolent the mind may be, is despoiled, if sensibly destitute of this disposition, of its peculiar burnish and beauty. It will indeed be approved and esteemed, but it will not be entirely relished. Gravity, existing beyond a certain degree, may render it forbidding. Reserve may render it suspicious, and a sorrowful melan-

choly aspect may excite a sympathy so painful, as to make it unwelcome. But a sweet, serene, and cheerful temper is the object, not only of esteem, but of delight. The presence of a person who manifests this temper is universally coveted, and diffuses a kind of lustre over every circle. He is accordingly welcomed to every house, and to every company. Even men destitute of religion will strongly relish his company, and will never mention his character without pointed commendation.

Beside the immediate and extensive pleasure which such a person communicates to those with whom he converses, this disposition recommends his opinions, his rules of life, his various conduct, and the several plans which he proposes for the benefit of mankind. Multitudes will embark with readiness and ardour in the promotion of purposes which he recommends; because they are recommended by *him;* because they think favourably of whatever he proposes, and love to unite with him in any pursuit. Thus this spirit, beside rendering him eminently agreeable to others, gives him an influence with mankind which he could not otherwise possess; and in the happiest manner increases his power to do good. It deserves particular consideration, that some of the most popular men who have ever lived in this country, have not been distinguished for brilliancy of genius, extensiveness of views, or profoundness of research; but while they possessed respectable talents, were remarkably distinguished by the disposition which I have here described.

Of this disposition, contentment is the uniform and the only efficacious source. By a discontented man it can be assumed only by effort, and for a moment; and must speedily and characteristically give way to the uneasy, fretful spirit, which has taken possession of his mind. There is indeed a native good humour which is pleasant to the possessor, and very agreeable to those with whom he converses. But this desirable disposition, although possessing many advantages, is radically defective, because it is a mere propensity, and not a moral principle. Too frail to sustain the rude shocks, or the long-continued pressure, of adversity, it is prone to give way in seasons of severe trial, and is incapable of the serene and steady endurance

so characteristical of a contented mind. Such a mind may bend, but while life lasts it will not break. Where native good humour would shrink and fly from the conflict on innumerable occasions, the contented mind will firmly brave the danger, sustain the assault, and with a cool, noiseless, unruffled energy, in the end overcome. At the same time, such a mind will always find at hand a divine Auxiliary, an almighty Friend, ever present, ever watchful, ever extending his arm to protect, strengthen, and give the victory. This indispensable aid, native good humour cannot claim. All its ultimate reliance is fixed on this world. Its eye is never lifted upward, but fastens on earth and time for all its resources. Contentment on the contrary, while she finds more sweetness in earthly enjoyment than good humour can ever find, and far more effectually lightens the pressure of calamity by the assistance which this world presents, fixes her eye on the heavens for superior aid, and sees the thickest darkness of suffering, and even of death, delightfully illumined by beams of glory shining from beyond the grave!

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# SERMON CXXX.

## TENTH COMMANDMENT.

### CHARITY.

*Charge them that are rich in this world—that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*—1 TIM. VI. 17—19.

THERE are, as I have heretofore observed, two attributes of the human mind, in the indulgence of which we especially disobey the tenth command, *viz.* ambition and avarice.

Contentment is opposed to both, particularly to the former. What in modern times is called *charity*, that is, a disposition cheerfully to impart our property and kind offices to the poor and suffering, is especially opposed to the latter. Of course it naturally becomes the next subject of our consideration in our progress.

In examining it, I propose briefly to point out,

I. *The nature of this duty;*

II. *The persons to whom;* and,

III. *The manner in which, it is to be performed;* and,

IV. *The motives to the performance.*

I. *I will endeavour to explain the nature of this duty.*

It has been already mentioned as a general definition of charity, as an attribute of the human mind, that it is a disposition cheerfully to impart our property and our kind offices to the poor and suffering. But we are not to suppose that every cheerful communication of these benefits to persons of this description, merits the name of charity in the evangelical sense.

Persons often aid the suffering merely from ostentation. These will not be suspected of charity.

Others do the same thing merely to free themselves from the importunate applications of those by whom it is solicited. This will not be mistaken for charity.

Some, and those not a few, impart their property to the distressed, because they place little value upon property. Neither will this be soberly considered as charitable conduct.

Some perform charitable acts to free themselves from those reproaches of conscience, which they are assured will follow the refusal of such acts.

Multitudes perform offices of this nature from the hope of acquiring the esteem of others, and the various benefits which it is expected to confer.

Other multitudes extend relief to sufferers from a native spirit of generosity. This is amiable, but is not even an intentional performance of any duty, and can therefore possess no evangelical character.

Others still do the same things under the influence of constitutional compassion or native tenderness. This also

is amiable, but for the same reason does not partake of an evangelical nature.

Some perform actions of this class, because they have been taught and habituated in early life to perform them as a duty. Though they merit and obtain the esteem of those around them, yet they never with the heart, or in the evangelical sense, perform any duty.

Others do works of this nature, because they have been accustomed to commend them highly, and are thus compelled to charitable exertions, for the sake of maintaining consistency of character.

Finally; Not a small number pursue a charitable course of life, because they think actions of this nature the sum and substance of religion, and expect by them to recommend themselves to the favour of God, and to obtain the blessings of a happy immortality. These men, whether aware of it or not, are intending to purchase heaven by paying the price which they suppose to be set upon it in the gospel.

It must undoubtedly be admitted, that in several of these cases, that which is actually done, is done cheerfully, and that property and kind offices are really imparted to the distressed; yet in none of them, at least in my opinion, is there any degree of evangelical charity.

Charity, in the evangelical sense, is no other than the beneficence required by the gospel, administered with the disposition which it requires, to a particular class of mankind, *viz.* those who are, or without this administration would be, in circumstances of distress. The disposition which is here intended, is that love which is the fulfilling of the law, the genuine source of every other duty.

If this account of the subject be admitted, it must also be conceded, that all acts of real charity are performed from a sense of duty, and with an intention to obey God in the performance, and that this is indispensable to its very existence. It cannot therefore be the result of native tenderness or compassion. No virtue is in the proper sense an exercise of any human passion. Virtue, in all instances, is *the energy of the mind directed to that which is right*, or in other words, agreeable to the will of God, and conducive to the good of the universe, *because it is believed to be*

*of this nature.* The native affections of the mind are in several instances amiable, and often contribute to enhance and adorn the real exercises of virtue, but in themselves they are never, in the evangelical sense, virtuous. That which is done without any sense of duty, and without an intention to perform a duty, can never sustain the character of virtue.

Farther; it is plain, if the above observations be admitted, that charity, in the sense of the gospel, is disinterested. The design, in every act which is entitled to this name, is to do real good to those who are its objects. The intention of the author of it will invariably be, to promote the happiness or to relieve the distresses of the sufferer; not to advance his own reputation, to promote his own selfish purposes, nor even to prevent the reproaches of his own conscience. In a word, selfishness, of whatever kind, and in whatever form it may exist, is not charity.

In addition to these things it may be observed, that evangelical charity demands essentially, that we take delight in doing the good which is to be done. *It is more blessed,* in the original, *it is more happy, to give than to receive;* that is, it is an employment, a character, attended of course with a higher degree of happiness; or, to declare the same truth in a more universal form; *It is a happier state to communicate good to others, than to gain it from their hands.* He who does not find some degree of this happiness, in bestowing alms and other kindnesses upon his suffering fellow-creatures, has not yet begun to be charitable.

II. *The persons to whom these offices of kindness are to be performed are various.*

These are universally such as already suffer, or have become liable to, some distress; to relieve or prevent which, the kind offices included under the name of charity, are necessary. It will readily occur, that within this broad description, there must be not only many persons, but many classes of persons, differing very materially in their character and circumstances, and having therefore very different claims upon the kind offices of their fellow-men. Among these are found all gradations of character and of suffering.

The class which first obtrudes itself upon the eye, is that of the common wandering beggars, seen in every country, and particularly in the streets of every city. There are not wanting persons, and those of a fair reputation, who hold that alms ought not to be given to this miserable class of mankind. In their view, charity administered to them answers scarcely any other purpose than to encourage idleness, intemperance, and other vices to which these degraded beings are so generally addicted. Whatever is done for them, it is observed, is ordinarily useless, and worse than useless to themselves; and might always be bestowed on more deserving objects, and with happier effects. That to a great extent these observations are just, cannot be questioned. But it may be questioned, whether they are capable of so universal an application. Some of these persons, and the number is not small, are unable to labour; and are yet without friends or home. To wander seems necessary for the preservation of their health, and even of their lives. It is not true of all of them, that they are vicious, nor that vice has been the means of reducing them to their present sufferings. I know of no evangelical principle, which warrants us to leave them to perish, or to refuse the proper means of alleviating their distresses.

*We commanded you,* says St. Paul to the Thessalonians, *that if any would not work, neither should he eat.* But it will not be supposed, that the apostle intended to include in this prohibition those who are unable to work, many of whom are found in this class of the indigent. To these, subsistence, comforts, medicines, and whatever kind offices are necessary, cannot be denied. Were no person suffered to wander in this manner, but such as I have described, probably objections never would have been started against admitting them within the pale of charity.

As to the really idle and vicious members, of which almost the whole of this class is apparently composed, it is in my opinion the duty of every government to force them, by every vindicable and necessary measure, to labour for their own subsistence.

Individuals are often unable to distinguish, among the wandering applicants for charity, which are proper objects

of their bounty. In this uncertainty, it seems to be a good rule to relieve the distresses occasioned by hunger and nakedness, wherever we cannot satisfactorily prove imposition on the part of the applicant. Money is given to such persons, when given at all, without answering any valuable end.

Concerning the administration of charity to sufferers of every other description, there will be no dispute.

Among these, those whom Providence has stationed in our own neighbourhood seem, in ordinary cases, to have superior claims for relief upon us for three reasons; *viz.* that it is in our power to do them more good than we can do to others, because they are within our reach; that the poor who are at a distance from us, will find other benefactors in their vicinity; and that, if we do not take a charitable care of those who surround us, they will ordinarily be without relief. It may be generally said, that Providence has placed them under our eye for the very purpose of awakening our beneficence towards them; and has thus, in a manner which may be called *express*, required this service at ourhands.

A distinction ought to be made among these on the score of that modesty which prevents some of them from soliciting benefactions, and even from making known their sufferings; on account of the industry and faithfulness with which some of them labour, amid many discouragements, to supply their own wants; as well as with regard to the uprightness of their dispositions, and the blamelessness of their lives. All these are obvious recommendations to evangelical charity. We are to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, *but especially to them who are of the household of faith.* The poor and suffering who belong to this household, have the first of all claims to the good which we are able to do. To relieve the distresses of these men, when the relief springs from the spirit of the gospel, is conduct so excellent, that, as Christ has expressly informed us, he will remember and distinguish it at the final day, and will regard the charity as being administered to himself.

Universally, the better the character of the sufferer, the higher will be his claims upon us for our beneficence.

III. *I will now endeavour to point out the manner in which this duty should be performed.*

Concerning this subject I observe,

1. *Our beneficence should obviously be such, as to answer the end which is proposed.*

The sufferings of this world are almost endlessly diversified. The modes of administering charity ought plainly to be varied, so as to suit the varieties of distress. A large proportion of the evils of life arise from want. The communication of property, in some degree and form or other, is the proper means of removing those which belong to this class. Others are derived from sickness, pain, disgrace, the loss of friends, the want of friends, the want of encouragement in the business of life; often from the fact that we are strangers; often from unkindness, contempt, and contumely, often from ignorance, want of advice; and from very many other sources. There are also distresses merely of a moral nature, such as spring from unhappy errors concerning the doctrines and duties of religion, from ignorance of the way of salvation, from spiritual prejudices, from stupidity, from temptations, and universally from sin in all its forms and degrees. Now it is evident, that very different modes of relief must be applied to these numerous and diversified cases of suffering. That mode only is of any value, which is fitted to accomplish the end. To employ ourselves in giving grave advice to a person famishing with hunger, would be not merely idle but ludicrous; and to offer food to a person labouring under the pangs of a broken heart, would be a speciman of folly equally contemptible.

2. *Our charity should be administered in such a degree as actually to accomplish the end.*

It is not enough to mitigate a calamity, when it is in our power to remove it: to assuage a disease when we are able to complete the cure; to give advice or consolation to a youth whose spirits are sinking for want of employment, when it is in our power to put him into useful business; to pity a backsliding Christian, when we are able to restore him to his duty; to pray for the conversion of the Heathen, when we can send them the word of God and missionaries

to preach it. Particularly, it is never enough to expend our benevolence to the distressed in talking, however wisely, however affectionately, however evangelically, concerning their sufferings, and the proper means of relieving them; or breathing sighs, or shedding tears, or uttering good wishes over their distresses. *If a brother or sister be naked, or destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?* Nothing is more absurd, nothing is more contemptible, than the charity which evaporates in words and wishes.

3. *It is our duty, so far as it is in our power, to relieve greater distresses in preference to those which are small.*

The smaller sufferings of those around us, are by no means to be neglected; and they have this recommendation to our particular attention, that we can almost always relieve them, when such as are greater may demand efforts beyond the limits of our ability. When this is not the case, a greater suffering prefers a proportionally stronger claim to our charitable exertions.

4. *When we have objects of charity in our neighbourhood, for whose relief we propose to contribute with regularity, it is ordinarily better to furnish them with a considerable sum at once, than to communicate to them the same aid in a number of smaller sums.*

Small sums are not only of little value in reality; but are usually regarded, especially by persons of this class, as being still less valuable. Improvidence is almost always a prominent feature in the character of those who permanently need charity. They neither have a just sense of the value of property, nor just apprehensions of the modes in which it may be laid out in the best manner. Little sums will in their view be incapable of answering any important purpose; and they rarely think of hoarding them until the accumulation shall become considerable. They will therefore usually expend them on objects of small consequence, even to themselves. On the contrary, if the bestower will become their treasurer, and accumulate for them, and thus convert the shillings which he might otherwise distribute, into a single benefaction of a guinea; they would rarely, proba-

bly never break so considerable a sum for any of those trifling objects upon which the shillings separately given would all have been expended.

It will commonly add much to the benefit of such a distribution, if it should also be made at stated and expected times, so that the object of the beneficence might calculate beforehand. In this case he would, on the one hand, endeavour to supply his intermediate wants, and on the other, would regularly fix upon an important purpose for which the expected benefaction would be laid out. In this manner they will learn to overcome their own want of economy, and acquire a degree of prudence in the management of their pecuniary concerns, to which otherwise they would be strangers through life.

5. *The best mode of communicating pecuniary assistance to such sufferers as have sufficient health and capacity, is to employ them.*

By this I intend, that we should furnish them with such means and such directions, as may be necessary to enable them to earn so much of their subsistence, as can be brought within their reach by their own industry. Most of the poor would choose to support themselves, if it were in their power. He who puts it in their power, delivers them from the painful consciousness of being burdensome to others: places them in a degree of independence which is rationally pleasant; and in many instances enables them ultimately to earn more than a mere subsistence; and thus teaches them, in the only effectual manner, how to provide for themselves. In addition to all this, he brings them within the pale of character and reputation, and renders them useful to themselves and to mankind. In this particular, men of active and extensive business are furnished by Providence with peculiar advantages for becoming important benefactors to mankind as well as to individuals.

6. *Our beneficence is often rendered to others much more usefully by personal exertions in their behalf, than by mere contribution of money.*

There are innumerable cases of suffering, of which property cannot become the relief. Of this nature are those of sickness, pain, sorrow, disgrace, decrepitude, friendlessness, the necessity of countenance, a broken heart, and all

that variety of anguish of spirit which respects our salvation. In all these, and in many other cases, the kindness needed is not pecuniary bounty, but those good offices which are suited to the nature of the suffering. Very many persons, perhaps almost all those who are in easy circumstances, much more willingly contribute their property than their personal services. To give a small sum of money, is often considered as an easy piece of self-denial; when a personal effort is regarded as a serious sacrifice.

But it is to no purpose to contribute money for the relief of distress, where we know that it will not produce the relief. The duty demanded by our circumstances, the benefit needed by those whom we profess to befriend, is always that of course which will effectuate relief for the calamity actually endured. Every thing else here is comparatively of no value.

Let it also be remembered, that the benefit communicated in these cases, by our good offices, is real, while that intended by our bounty is imaginary; and that, in proportion to the self-denial which our kindness may demand, will be the amiableness and the worth of the disposition by which it is rendered. Even in cases where the relief of suffering is to be accomplished by pecuniary bounty, it will often be true that he, who in his own person solicits contributions, is a greater benefactor than any of those who furnish them, even without supposing him to contribute at all.

But in a great multitude of cases, some of which have been specified, property cannot be the means of relief. Property cannot watch with the sick, nor administer remedies for their diseases, nor heal a wounded spirit, nor comfort mourners, nor restore resolution to the discouraged, nor withdraw a wanderer from vice and ruin, nor place his feet in the way of life. If we are really charitable, we shall endeavour to do all these and the like kind offices. If we are unwilling to do them, it is because we are destitute of charity.

7. *We are bound to make this communication of beneficence a part of our system of life.*

When once it is determined by us, that the performance of this duty is one great end for which we live, and that a considerable part of our time, our labours, and our sub-

stance, is to be employed in this manner, much of our native reluctance to it may be regarded as being overcome. Whatever we do habitually, however irksome it may be at first, will in the end be willingly done. At first we think of little beside the difficulties which will attend the performance. As we proceed, the employment itself gradually becomes pleasant; and we also realize more and more the various pleasures by which it is attended. At the same time, whenever any conduct becomes part of our system of action, as we regularly expect to adopt it, we make a regular and constant preparation for the performance. In the present case, for example, when it has become an habitual object to bestow upon the poor pecuniary bounty; we shall so regulate our expenses as continually to be in possession of the means of this bounty, and shall not be unprovided, when the occasions for charity occur. If personal assistance is the beneficence demanded; we shall so adjust our business, as to be able, without serious inconvenience, to perform the kind offices which this duty may require. Universally, of whatever nature the good to be done may be, we shall in this case be prepared to do it, and that as a part of the business of life.

On the contrary, he who performs acts of charity only in a desultory and occasional manner, will find himself unready to fulfil such of its demands as he will acknowledge to be real and obligatory, will halt between the duty and the sacrifice which it will cost, and will often persuade himself in opposition to the first dictates of his conscience, that in the existing case he may be lawfully excused.

In addition to what has been said it ought to be diligently remembered, that we were not made for ourselves, that we were made for the glory of our Creator, and the good of our fellow-creatures; and that it is our supreme interest, as well as our indispensable duty, to fulfil this exalted end of our being. We are ever to keep before our eyes, that it is always unnecessary, and usually undesirable, for us to be rich; that when in the course of honest industry we become rich, we are peculiarly obligated to *do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;* and that, in this manner, we shall lay up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come.

Still farther we are bound to realize, that our property belongs to God, that to us it is a mere gift of his bounty, that there is no good in it, unless we gratefully rejoice in the loving-kindness of the Giver, and do good in our life, and that then only we are entitled to enjoy the good of all our labour. Finally, we are to realize, that God is especially glorified when good is done to mankind.

If these interesting considerations are continually kept in view, and brought home to the heart, it seems hardly possible that we should not be well prepared to perform all those actions which are included under the comprehensive name of charity.

IV. *Among the numerous motives to the performance of this duty, I shall select the following.*

1. *We shall preserve ourselves from the deplorable passion of avarice.*

Cast back your eyes for a moment on the exhibition made of this attribute in the preceding discourse, and tell me which of you is willing to subject himself to the miserable bondage of its domination? Which of you is willing to sustain the character, which of you to perform the actions, which to receive the reward? Can any character be more unfit for a rational being, more odious or more contemptible in itself, or, in proportion to its means, more mischievous to mankind? How emphatically true is it, that *the love of money is the root of all evil;* that those who love it, *fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown man in destruction and perdition;* that they are seduced from the faith, and pierce themselves through, or, as in the original, *all around,* with many sorrows! Let every one of you who is a child of God, let every one of you who intends to become a child of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, and love.

But nothing seems better fitted to prevent or to root out this wretched passion, than an habitual performance of the duties of charity. He who accustoms himself to give freely and to act kindly to others, especially to the poor and suffering, from whom he can rationally hope for nothing again, can scarcely fail in the end of being willing to give,

and to give liberally. For a truly charitable man to be covetous is impossible.

Let me add, that in this manner also we shall be secured from the imputation of avarice. Nothing will sooner or more perfectly destroy a good name than this imputation; nothing more certainly awaken the hatred and the scorn of our fellow-men; nothing more certainly preclude us from any rational or desirable influence over them.

2. *By a faithful performance of these duties, we shall secure to ourselves the esteem of our fellow-men.*

*A good name,* says Solomon, *is better than great riches.* Among all the things which are done by man, nothing more certainly assures us of the best reputation, than a regular and cheerful performance of charitable offices. Not only do the wise and good, but men of all inferior descriptions also, readily acknowledge the worth of beneficence, peculiarly when administered to such as are in distress. Excellence in other forms is often doubted, denied, disrelished, and calumniated. In this it seems always to be respected. The character acknowledged is not merely good: it is the best. The hardest heart acknowledges its worth; and the most niggardly tongue vibrates in its praise. How often, when the eye is wandering over published accounts, even fictitious ones, of beneficence administered to the poor and friendless, does the tear of tenderness and sympathy start, and the bosom warm with pleasure at this display of evangelical excellence! Whose voice does not delight to sound the praises of Howard; and how little do nobles, heroes, and princes, appear at his side!

In the possession of such a character, we of course acquire a happy influence over our fellow-men; and this influence is the chief means of our usefulness. An individual acting alone can do little towards promoting the well-being of his fellow-men; while the same individual, by means of extensive influence, may become an important public blessing. Although therefore reputation, considered merely as a gratification of our pride, is of little consequence; its value, as the means of usefulness, is inestimable. In this view, *a good name is* indeed *rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour than silver and gold.*

3. *In the performance of these duties we ensure to ourselves the approbation of our own consciences.*

This is always the consequence of performing our duty; yet there are some duties from which it springs in a peculiar degree. Among these, the administration of charity obviously holds a high station. As there is something eminently lovely in beneficence to the eyes of those who look on, so it is seen to be thus lovely by the eye of the benefactor. It is a glorious character of God, that he is good, that he doeth good, and that his tender mercies are over all his works. This character we never so directly and peculiarly resemble, as when we do good with the spirit of the gospel. Of this resemblance, and the beauty of it, the mind is conscious of course; and surveying the divine image instamped upon itself, beholds its lustre and loveliness with a delight which is independent, serene, and incomparably superior to every thing which the world is able to give or take away.

4. *It secures the approbation of God.*

Concerning this truth there can be no debate. Multitudes indeed suppose nothing else to be necessary for this purpose; and seem willing to consider it as supplying all deficiencies of repentance, faith and love to God, even when their beneficence is that of the hands, and not that of the heart. This undoubtedly is an error, and a very dangerous one. Still it is certain, that evangelical beneficence will secure to us the divine approbation; for he in whom it is found, will certainly possess every other evangelical attribute. In an eminent degree, is it obedience to very numerous commands of the gospel; and in a degree no less eminent is it an object of scriptural promises. *Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble; the Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth: the Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing. He hath dispersed; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever.*

5. *It is a striking resemblance to the character of the Redeemer.*

*Jesus Christ*, saith St. Peter, *a man who went about doing*

*good.* How exact a description is this of our Saviour's life! To pass by the divine doctrines which he taught, how entirely were all his miracles directed to this single end! He healed the sick; he fed the hungry; he comforted the sorrowful; cleansed the leprous, cast out devils, and restored soundness to the lame, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead: and still more wonderful were his sufferings. All the contradiction which he endured from sinners, all the agonies of the garden and the cross, and all the humiliation of the grave, he endured solely for the purpose of rescuing wretched apostates, condemned and ruined, from final perdition. How lovely, how glorious a character! *Mine elect,* saith God the Father, *in whom my soul delighteth: my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* What angel would not delight to make such a character his pattern! What Christian would not follow his example!

6. *It will secure a divine reward.*

It is a most remarkable fact, that in our Saviour's account of his administrations at the final day, he has founded his approbation of good men and their everlasting reward, upon their performance of the duties of charity. *Come, ye blessed of my Father,* will the Judge of the quick and the dead say to them on his right hand, *inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in; naked, and clothed thee; or when saw we thee sick, and in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

On the other hand, the cause expressly assigned for the condemnation of the wicked at the same awful day, is their omission of these very duties. How delightful then will it be to go from this world with a consciousness, that the duties of charity have been all performed by ourselves!

How melancholy, how dreadful, to stand before the Judge with a conviction that they have been all neglected!

## SERMON CXXXI.

### TENTH COMMANDMENT.

### AVARICE.

*They that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*—1 TIM. VI. 9, 10.

IN the two preceding discourses I examined the nature and benefits of *contentment;* the immediate object of injunction in the tenth command: and of *charity;* a duty which it obviously implies. The subject which next offers itself to consideration, is *the covetousness* which is the immediate object of prohibition in this precept. This I shall discuss under the two general heads of *avarice and ambition.*

The former of these shall occupy the present discourse.

The spirit of covetousness extends indeed, both its views and desires, to the objects of sensuality, as well as to wealth and distinction. But beside that these are not commonly considered as the proper objects of covetousness, I have already discoursed so extensively concerning several sensual gratifications, as to render it unnecessary again to bring them into a particular examination.

In the present discussion, it is my design to consider,

I. *The folly;*

II. *The guilt;* and,

III. *The mischiefs; of avarice.*

All these subjects are directly mentioned in the text. Of those who *will be rich,* it is said, that they *fall into many*

*foolish lusts.* These lusts are also said to be *hurtful,* and to *drown men in destruction and perdition.* It is farther said, that *the love of money is the root of all evil. Some* who had *coveted after it,* in or before the days of St. Paul, he declares, *erred,* or were seduced *from the faith; and pierced themselves through* περιεπειραν, *pierced themselves all around; with many sorrows.* Here we find the folly, guilt, and mischiefs, of avarice, asserted in the strongest as well as the most explicit terms. What is thus testified by St. Paul, the common sense of mankind has, in every age and country, attested in the most ample manner. All nations, wherever wealth has existed, have declared covetousness to be eminently *foolish, sinful, and mischievous.* A stronger specimen of this testimony can hardly be given, than in the appropriation of the name, *miser, a wretch,* to the avaricious man.

The proofs which I shall give at the present time, of the *folly of avarice,* are the following.

1. *The pursuits of the avaricious man are attended by many unnecessary anxieties, labours, and distresses.*

The mind of an avaricious man is always the seat of eager desire. So peculiarly is this the fact, that the words *covetous* and *covetousness,* although originally signifying any inordinate desire, denote in common usage, when unqualified by other phraseology, *the inordinate passion of wealth;* and are equivalent to the words *avaricious* and *avarice.* This fact, more strongly than any reasoning could, proves, that the love of riches is usually, in an eminent degree, inordinate. But whenever our desires sustain this character, the mind becomes proportionally *anxious.* Our attainment of the coveted object is, in most cases, necessarily uncertain. Between the fear of losing and the hope of acquiring it, the mind is necessarily suspended. As these desires are *continually* exerted, the suspense becomes, of course, continual also. A state of suspense is always a state of anxiety. Here the anxiety is regularly great and distressing; because the desires are incessant, eager, and sufficiently strong to control all the powers of the mind.

But this anxiety is unnecessarily suffered. All the prudence and industry, which can be lawfully exerted for the acquisition of wealth, may be employed, and all the pro-

perty which can be lawfully acquired, may be gained, without the exercise of a single avaricious feeling, and without the sufferance of a single avaricious anxiety. The contented man often becomes rich, to every desirable degree, amid the full possession of serenity, peace, and self-approbation.

Nor are the *labours* of the avaricious man of a less unfortunate nature. His mind is continually strained with effort. The strength of his desires, goads him into an unceasing course of contrivances to gratify them. His thirst for property, drives him to an incessant formation of plans by which he hopes to acquire it. The fear of lessening what he has acquired, hurries him into an endless and wearisome train of exertions, to secure himself from losses. Thus a course of mental toil is voluntarily assumed by him, resembling, not the independent labours of a freeman, but the drudgery of a slave. The mind of an old miser is thus in a continual state of travail; and struggles through life under the pressure of an iron bondage.

A mind hurried by eager schemes of effort, is always a tyrant to the body. Accordingly, the bodily labours of the miser commence before the dawn; worry him through the day; and scarcely permit him to lie down at night. A mere dray-horse, he is destined to a course of incessant toil. The only changes of life to him are, from dragging loads to bearing burdens; and like those of the dray-horse, they are all borne and dragged for the use of others.

To the pains, springing hourly from this unintermitted toil, are added the daily reproaches of conscience; the sufferings of disease and accident, to which such a life is peculiarly exposed; the contempt of those around him; the denial of their pity to his sufferings; and their universal joy in his mortification.

2. *The wishes of the avaricious man are followed by innumerable disappointments.*

The property which he covets, he often fails to acquire. His plans, although formed with his utmost sagacity, and with extreme care, are not unfrequently frustrated. His debtors become bankrupt. His hard bargains are avoided. His deeds or other obligations are defective. His agents are often unskilful, often unfaithful; and while they are

employed merely because they will serve him at a cheap rate, frequently make their service distressingly expensive. Storms also will blow in spite of his wishes. Shelves will spread, and rocks will stand in the way of *his* ships, as well as in the way of others. The gain which he looks for, will often only appear to excite his most anxious desires, and mock him with the most painful disappointment.

Scarcely less is he wounded, when the gain in view is partially acquired. The advantage of a bargain, the amount of a crop, or the profits of a voyage, are less than his expectations have promised. As his calculations are all set high, and made by the hand of ardent desire; they of course overrun his success. But moderate success frustrates immoderate desire little less than absolute disappointment.

Should we even suppose his success to equal his expectations, he will be still disappointed. He covets wealth for the good which he supposes it will confer. This good is not the supply of his wants, the communication of conveniences, or the ministration of luxuries. Luxuries and conveniences he has not a wish to enjoy; and his wants might be supplied by a tenth, a twentieth, or even a hundredth, part of what he possesses. Personal importance, influence, and distinction, constitute eminently the good which the miser expects from his gains. But this object he often fails to accomplish; and, in the measure which he expects, always. Some of those around him will, in spite of both his wishes and labours, be richer than himself. Others will possess superior understanding; and others superior excellence. Some or all of these will acquire more reputation, weight, or influence, than himself. Thus he is compelled to see men, who are his rivals, whom he hates, or whom he either dreads as being more, or despises as being less, rich than himself, raised above him in the public estimation: while his own mind is left to the ranklings of envy, and the miseries of disappointment. At the same time, he is frequently stung by the severities of well-founded censure, lashed by the hand of scorn, and set up as a mark for the shafts of derision. He is also without friends, without commiseration, without esteem. He who would gain esteem, must deserve it. He who would *have friends, must*

*shew himself friendly.* He who would find commiseration, must commiserate others.

3. *The good which the avaricious man actually gains is uncertain.*

Wealth is the only good which he seeks. If this then is lost, he loses his all. Nothing can be more unwise than to centre all our views, wishes, and labours, in uncertain good. But the good of the miser is eminently uncertain. No truth is more attested by the experience of man, than that *riches make to themselves wings as an eagle, and fly away towards heaven.* The dangers to which wealth is exposed are innumerable. The schemes of its possessor, in spite of all human sagacity, will at times prove abortive. Flaws will at times be found in the written securities, with which he attempts to guard his gains. The formation of them will often be committed to unskilful, because they are cheap, hands. Incompetent and unfaithful persons will at times be trusted, because they offer peculiarly advantageous terms. Houses, notes, bonds, and deeds, will at times be consumed by fire. Crops will fail. Cattle will die. Ships will be captured, or providentially lost. The owner and his family will be sick. Debtors will abscond, or become bankrupt; and swindlers will run away with loans which, in spite of avaricious prudence, they have obtained. In every case of such a nature, the miser's regrets are throes; his disappointments are agonies. The instinctive language of his heart is, *Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more?*

But avarice often amasses wealth for its heirs. Solomon *hated all the labour* which he had undergone to acquire riches, because he should leave them *to the man who should come after him;* and knew not *whether he would be a wise man, or a fool.* This uncertainty attends every man who amasses wealth. His destined heir or heirs may be wise and prudent; inclined to such expenses only as are useful; and prepared to preserve their inheritance undiminished, for those who shall come after them. But they may die before they receive their patrimony, and leave it to the possession of prodigals; to men who will expend it for purposes which the original owner most abhorred, and in a manner so rapid and wanton as would, if he were living, scarcely leave him

the possession of his reason. The intention of all men who lay up property for their children, is unquestionably to do them good. How often is this intention defeated! The property accumulated is designed to make them rich. How often is it the very means of making them poor! It is bequeathed to make them happy. How often is it the cause of their ruin! How often is a splendid inheritance the source of idleness, profusion, negligence, gambling, rash adventure, and speedy beggary! To harass one's self through life, merely to promote these miserable ends, is certainly, if any thing is, *vanity and vexation of spirit.*

4. *The avaricious man incapacitates himself to enjoy the very good which he seeks.*

In order to enjoy any kind of good, it is indispensable that we should experience some degree of contentment; at least, during the period of enjoyment. *But he that loveth silver, will never be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance, with increase.* The desire of gain enlarges faster than the most successful and romantic acquisitions; and were pounds to be accumulated as rapidly as the most favoured children of fortune multiply pence; the eager mind would still overleap the limits of its possessions, and demand new additions to its wealth with accelerated avidity. As these desires increase, the fear, the reluctance, to enjoy what is accumulated, are proportionally increased. The miser, instead of furnishing himself with more gratifications, and enjoying them more highly as his means of indulgence are increased, lessens them in number and degree; and tastes them with a more stinted, parsimonious relish. His habitation, his dress, his food, his equipage, all become more decayed, mean, and miserable, continually; because he feels less and less able to afford, first conveniences, then comforts, and then necessaries. *Although he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth; yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof.* A rich miser, who lives like a beggar, is only a beggar dreaming that he is rich.

II. *The guilt of avarice may be illustrated in the following manner.*

1. *The disposition is in itself grossly sinful.*

This truth the Scriptures have exhibited with peculiar

force. *Covetousness,* saith St. Paul, *is idolatry.* Every person who has read his Bible, knows that idolatry is marked in the Scriptures as pre-eminent sin; as peculiarly *the abominable thing,* which God says, *My soul hates.* Its enormity I have illustrated in a former discourse. It will therefore be unnecessary to expatiate upon it here. I shall only observe, as we are taught by St. Paul, that *no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

Common sense has long since pronounced the avaricious man to be an idolater, in the adage proverbially used to describe his character; that he "*makes gold his god.*" Plainly, he prefers wealth to every other object; and consecrates his heart, his talents, and his time, to the single purpose of becoming rich. To this object he evidently postpones the real God; and neither renders to him, nor, while avarice predominates, can render, his affections or his services. With such *love of the world,* the *love of the Father* cannot be united. But how sordid, how shameful, how sinful, is it thus to *worship* and *serve* a contemptible *creature* more than the *Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.*

*By this disposition, he in whom it dwells is unfitted for all his duty to God.* Our duty to God is performed, if performed at all, from that supreme love to him, which is enjoined in the first and greatest command of the moral law. But the heart of the avaricious man cannot thus love God, because he renders this love to the world. He cannot worship God, because he worships gold. He cannot serve God, because he serves mammon. Thus his heart is alienated from his Maker; and his life employed in a continual and gross impiety.

2. *Avarice speedily destroys the tenderness both of the heart and of the conscience.*

*To be without natural affection* is, in the estimation of the Scriptures, as well as that of common sense, to be eminently and hopelessly sinful. But nothing sooner hardens the native feelings of the heart than the love of riches. Open to *them,* the soul is sealed up to every thing else; and loves nothing in comparison with them. Soon and easily it becomes callous to all the objects of tenderness and endear-

ment; forgets the neighbour, the poor, and the distressed; and even neglects its nearest friends and relations. To such a heart, poverty petitions, distress pleads, and nature cries, in vain. Its ears are deaf; its eyes blind; and its hands closed. In vain the unhappy petitioner approaches with the hope of finding relief. Instead of meeting with the tear of sympathy, and the gentle voice of compassion, he is driven from the gate by the insults of a slave, and the growl of a mastiff.

With tenderness of feeling vanishes also *tenderness of conscience:* that inestimable blessing to man: the indispensable means of piety and salvation. The continual increase of the appetite for wealth continually overcomes its remonstrances, and gradually diminishes its power. Conscience often vanquished, is vanquished with ease. Avarice accomplishes this defeat every day and every hour. Soon therefore its voice, always disregarded, ceases to be heard. Then religion and duty plead with as little success as friendship and suffering pleaded before. All the motives to repentance, faith, and obedience, lose their power; and might with equal efficacy be addressed to blocks and stones. To the miser, nothing is of any value but wealth. But wealth conscience cannot proffer; the Scriptures do not ensure; God does not promise. Therefore conscience, the Scriptures, and God, are of no value to him. To riches, to bargains, to loans, to amassing, to preserving, he is alive. To reformation, to piety, to salvation, he is dead.

3. *The life of the avaricious man is an unceasing course of injustice.*

It is an unceasing course of *fraud.* Few such men fail of being guilty of open dishonesty; the natural and almost necessary consequence of a covetous disposition. Should we suppose him to escape this iniquity, and, fixing his standard of morality as high as any avaricious man knows how to fix it, to make the law of the land his rule of righteousness; he will still live *a life* of fraud. His only scheme of action is uniformly, to get as much as that law will permit; and it will permit, because it cannot prevent, frauds innumerable. Every hard bargain, as I have formerly observed, is a fraud; and the bargains of this man, unless his weakness forbids or Providence prevents, are all hard.

But his life is spent in making such bargains, and is therefore spent in fraud.

It is also an unceasing course of *oppression*. The bargains which I have already specified, are not fraudulent only, they are cruel. They are made, in innumerable instances, with the poor and suffering; and fill his coffers out of the pittance of want, and the gleanings of the widow and the fatherless. With an iron hand, he grasps the earnings of the necessitous; and *snatches and devours on the right hand, and on the left.*

In this oppression, *his own family take their full share.* His coffers indeed are rich, but himself and his family are poor. Often are they denied even the comforts of life; and always that education and those enjoyments which wealth is destined to supply. Their food is mean, and stinted. Their clothes are the garb of poverty. The education which they receive, is such as forms a menial character, and fits them only for a menial condition. Their comforts are measured out to them, not in streams, but in solitary drops. When they are settled in life, the means of business and enjoyment are supplied to them with so parsimonious a hand, as to cut them off from every useful plan, and every comfortable expectation. If hope at any time shines upon them, it shines only to be overcast. By their parent they are continually mocked with the cup of Tantalus; which they are permitted indeed to touch, but not to taste. When he leaves the world, and is compelled to impart his possessions to them; they find themselves, by a stinted education and shrivelled habits, rendered wholly unable either to enjoy their wealth themselves, or make it useful to others.

4. *The covetous man is almost of course a liar.*

The great design of the avaricious man, which fills his heart, spreads through his life, and controls all his conduct, is to get as much as he can; at least so far as it can be done legally and safely. This is the utmost point of honesty ever aimed at by an avaricious man. If this be attained, such a man always regards himself as being really honest. But in this he is wonderfully deceived. His favourite principle conducts him regularly to unceasing fraud; and regularly issues in a course of lying. As it is his aim always to sell for more, and buy for less, than justice will

permit; he of course represents the value of his own commodities to be greater, and that of his neighbour's to be less, than the truth. As he spends most of his life in buying and selling, or in forming schemes to buy and sell, in this manner; he employs no small part of it either in actual or intentional lying. To compass the same object also, he is equally tempted to misrepresent his own circumstances; the state of the markets; the quality and quantity, the the soundness, weight, and measure, of the commodities which he sells; and, so far as may be, of those which he buys. Thus the horse, the house, or the land, which he is about to buy, is, according to his own account, poor, defective, and of little value. But as soon as he chooses to sell it, it has, according to his own account also, wonderfully changed its nature; and become excellent, free from every defect, and of very superior value. Yet, with this chain of falsehoods always hanging about his neck, the miserable wretch is frequently so blind, as not to mistrust that he is a liar.

5. *All these and all other sins of the avaricious man, speedily become gross and rank habits.*

I know of no disposition which sooner or more effectually makes a man blind to his own character than avarice. The miser rarely, if ever, mistrusts that he is a sinner. He thinks himself only a rich man. He does not dream that he is an oppressor, a liar, and a cheat; but merely supposes himself to be prosperous, sagacious, and skilled in business. With these views he will naturally entertain no thoughts of repentance, and no suspicion that it is necessary for him. His conscience, it is to be remembered, has, in the mean time, lost its power to remonstrate and to alarm. His heart also is so entirely engrossed by schemes of accumulating wealth, or is rather so absolutely possessed by the demon of avarice, as to have neither time nor room for the admission of a thought concerning reformation. He is left therefore to the domination of this wretched appetite; and becomes fixed and hardened in all his sins, without a check and without resistance. There is probably no more obdurate heart than that of avarice; and no more hopeless character. Every passage to it appears to be closed up except one; and that is opened only to gain.

III. *The mischiefs of avarice are innumerable.* A few of them only can be even mentioned at the present time, These I shall consider as *personal, private,* and *public.*

Among the personal mischiefs of avarice are to be reckoned, all the *follies* and all the *sins* which have been already specified; so far as their influence terminates in the avaricious man himself. They are not sins and follies only, they are mischiefs also, as indeed is every other sin and folly. As mischiefs, their combined efficacy is very great, malignant, and dreadful; such as would be deliberately encountered by no man but a profligate; such as would make a considerate man tremble.

To these let me add the guilt and misery of *discontentment* and *envy.* However fast the wealth of the avaricious man may increase; to whatever size the heaps may swell, his accumulations always lag behind his wishes. Indeed, they never keep pace with what he feels to be *his due.* In his own view he has a right to be rich; and he regards the providence of God as under a species of obligation to make him rich. To these claims his wishes furnish the only limit; and whenever they are not satisfied, as is always the case unless in the moment of some distinguished success, he becomes fretful, impatient, and angry, at the dispensations of Providence. He may not indeed accuse God of injustice face to face. But he murmurs at his providence under the names of *fortune, chance, luck, the state of things,* and *the course of events.* Against these, and through these against God, his complaints are loud, vehement, bitter, full of resentment, and full of impiety.

Amid the troubles derived from this source, he cannot fail, whenever he looks around him, to find some men happier as well as more prosperous, at least in some respects, than himself. This man may be richer. That, though inferior in wealth, may possess a piece of land, a house, a servant, which, although a darling object of his covetous desires, he may be unable to obtain. A third may have more reputation. A fourth may have more influence. A fifth may be better beloved. Towards any or all of these, his envy may be directed with as malignant a spirit as his murmuring against God. It is not easy to conceive of a

mind more wretched or more odious, than that which makes itself miserable at the sight of happiness enjoyed by others; and pines at the thought of enjoyments which are not its own. This spirit is the vulture of Prometheus, preying unceasingly upon its liver; which was ever renewed, that it might be for ever devoured.

With envy, discontentment, its twin-sister, perpetually dwells. The wretch whose heart is the habitation of both, is taught and influenced by them to believe, that God is his enemy, because he does not minister to his covetousness; and that men are his enemies, because they enjoy the good which God has given them. Even happiness itself, so delightful wherever it is seen, to a benevolent eye, is a source of anguish only to him, unless when locked up in his own coffers.

The grovelling and gross *taste* of the miser is in my view also eminently pernicious. To be under the government of such a taste, is plainly to be cut off from all rich and refined enjoyment. The miser endeavours to satiate himself upon the dross of happiness. But he neither discerns nor seeks for the *fine gold*. The delicious viands proffered to intelligent and immortal minds by the beneficence of God, are lost upon a palate which can satiate itself upon garbage. The delightful emotions of contentment, gratitude, and complacency towards his Maker; the sweets of a self-approving mind; the charming fruition of tenderness and sympathy; the refined participation of social good; and the elevated satisfaction which springs instinctively from the beneficent promotion of that good; can never find an entrance into a heart, all the avenues to which are barred up by the hand of avarice. But to lose these blessings is to lose infinitely.

At the same time, *the miser wastes of course his day of probation*. His life is wholly occupied by the pursuit of wealth. Of sin and ruin, of holiness and heaven, he has not time even to think. His life is too short for the accomplishment of his main object. Suns for him rise too late; and set too soon. Too rapidly do his days succeed each other; and too early do they terminate their career. His last sickness arrests him while he is counting his gold; and death knocks at his door while he is in the midst of a gain-

ful bargain. Thus he is hurried and goaded through the journey of life by his covetousness; and finds no opportunity to pause and think upon the concerns of his soul; no moment in which he can withdraw his eye from gain, and cast a look towards heaven. *It is easier,* saith our Saviour, *for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

Thus it is evident, that *they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition;* that *the love of money is the root of all evil;* and that *such as covet after it pierce themselves through with many sorrows.*

*The private mischiefs of avarice are those which affect unhappily the interests of families and neighbourhoods.*

To these little circles, formed to be happy, and actually the scenes of the principal happiness furnished by this world, the miser is a common nuisance. To his family he presents the miserable example of covetousness, fraud, oppression, falsehood, and impiety; and the most humiliating and distressing living picture of an abandoned worldling, forgetting his God, and forgotten by him; worshipping gold; ever craving and devouring, but never satisfied; denying himself and his household the comforts of life; and imparting to them the necessaries only in crumbs and shreds; living a life of perpetual meanness and debasement; wasting the day of probation: *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath;* advancing onward to his final account, without an effort or a thought of preparation for this tremendous event: and, all this while, irresistibly endeared to them by the strong power of natural affection.

*On the neighbourhood the miser inflicts the complicated, harassing, and intense, evils of continually repeated fraud and oppression.* Wherever such a man plants himself, sufferings spring up all around him. To the young, the ignorant, the thoughtless, and the necessitous, he lends money at exorbitant interest, and with ten-fold security. The payment he discourages, until the amount has become sufficient to enable him, with a suit, to enclose their whole possessions in his net. To the poor and suffering also he sells, at unconscionable prices, the necessaries of life. Notes, bonds, and mortgages, given by persons of

the same description, he buys at an enormous discount. Of estates, left intestate, he watchfully seeks, and with art and perseverance obtains, the administration. When others are obliged to buy, he sells: and, when others are obliged to sell, he buys. In this manner his loans are almost instantaneously doubled; and property, mortgaged to him for a tenth part of its value, is swallowed up. The estates of widows and orphans melt away before his breath, as the snow beneath the April sun. The possessions of all around him move only towards his den. The farm and the house, the garden and the cottage, the herd on the one hand, and the widow's cow and ten sheep on the other, go down together into this open sepulchre. Over the miserable beings who cannot escape his fangs, he reigns with a despotic and wolfish dominion. All around him tremble at his nod: and, should any one retain sufficient energy to question his pleasure, or dispute his control, he points his eyes to the jail, and hushes every murmur to silence, and every thought to despair.

*Nor does he less injure society*, although the injury is ordinarily less observed, as being less felt, *by corrupting both his family and his neighbourhood.* His example emboldens, his skill instructs, and his success allures, those who are witnesses of his life, to pursue the same course of villany and oppression. All the sagacious, sharpen their cunning by his practical lessons. The intrepid become daring by his example. The greedy become ravenous by his success. Thus the spirit of avarice is caught; its villanies are multiplied; and a poisonous cion engrafted upon every stock in the neighbourhood. His own sons, if not broken down by his hard-handed parsimony, or induced by their sufferings to detest it, and rush into the opposite extreme of profusion, become proficients in all the mysteries of fraud and oppression: not instructed and led only, but drilled into, the eager, shrewd, and gainful, pursuit of wealth. From him they learn to undervalue all rules of morality, except the law of the land; to violate the dictates of compassion; to burst the bonds of conscience; and to regard with indifference and contempt the will of God. In his house, as in a second Newgate, young men soon become old in villany; and with a heart prematurely hard-

ened into stone, and hands trained to mischief by transferred experience, are turned loose to prey upon the vitals of society.

The *public mischiefs* of avarice are not less numerous; and are of incomprehensible magnitude. It was one of the glorious characteristics of the men recommended by Jethro to Moses to fill the stations of rulers, that *they hated covetousness:* a characteristic indispensable to him who would *rule justly*, and be a *minister of God for good to his people.* When avarice ascends the chair of state, mingles with the councils of princes, seats herself on the bench of justice, or takes her place in the chamber of legislation; nay, when she takes possession of subordinate departments, particularly of those which are financial, in the administration of government; her views become extended, and her ravages terrible. The man over whom she has established her dominion sees, even in the humblest of these stations, prospects of acquiring wealth opening suddenly upon him, of which he before never formed a conception. In the mysterious collection of revenues, the mazy management of taxes, the undefined claims for perquisites, the opportunities of soliciting and receiving customary bribes, and in the boundless gulf of naval and military contracts, he beholds new means and new motives for the exercise of all his talents, fraud, and rapacity, and for the speedy acquisition of opulence crowding upon him at once. The alluring scene he surveys with the same spirit with which a vulture eyes the field of blood. Every thing on which he can fasten his talons, here becomes his prey. The public he cheats without compunction: individuals he oppresses without pity. There is sufficient wealth in the world to supply all its inhabitants with comfort. But when some become suddenly and enormously rich, multitudes must sink into the lowest depths of poverty. To enable a single farmer of revenues, or a single contractor, to lodge in a palace, to riot at the table of luxury, and to roll on wheels of splendour, thousands have sweat blood, and wrung their hands in agony. But what is all this to him? He is rich; whoever else may be poor. He is fed; whoever else may starve. The frauds and ravages of public agents, which find palliation, countenance, and excuse, from the fact that they have become

customary, constitute no small part of that oppression, which has awakened the groans and cries of the human race, from the days of Nimrod to the present hour.

But avarice is not confined to subordinate agents. Often it ascends the throne, and grasps the sceptre. The evils of which it is the parent in this situation, are fully proportioned to its power, and outrun the most excursive wanderings of imagination. A large part of the miseries entailed on mankind by oppressive taxes at home, and ruinous wars abroad, are created by the lust for plunders. This fiend hurried the Spaniards to America; and stung them into the perpetration of all those cruelties which laid waste the empires of Mexico and Peru. The same foul spirit steered the slave-ships of America and Europe to the African shores; tore from their friends, children, and parents, ten millions of the unoffending natives; transported them in chains across the Atlantic; and hurried them to the grave by oppressive toil, torture, and death. Every where, and in every age, she has wasted the happiness, wrung the heart, and poured out the blood, of man. Relentless as death, and insatiable as the grave, she has continually *opened her mouth without measure; and the glory, the multitude, and the pomp,* of cities, states, and empires, have descended into the abyss!

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# SERMON CXXXII.

## TENTH COMMANDMENT.

### AMBITION.

*Mind not high things.*—Rom. xii. 16.

The subject of the preceding discourse, you may remember, was *avarice*. In the present I shall consider the other great exercise of a covetous spirit, viz. *ambition*.

*Ambition* is an affection of the mind nearly related to *pride* and *vanity*. *Vanity* is the self-complacency which

we feel in the consciousness of being superior to others. *Pride* is the same self-complacency, united with a contempt for those whom we consider as our inferiors. Ambition is the desire of obtaining or increasing this superiority. Vanity usually makes men civil and complaisant. Pride renders them rude, imperious, and overbearing. Vanity chiefly subjects men to the imputation of weakness; and excites mingled emotions of pity and contempt. Pride is often attended with a kind of repulsive dignity; is rather seen to be deserving of contempt than realized as the object of it; sometimes awakens awe; and always creates hatred and loathing. Vain men are always ambitious; proud men generally; but they sometimes appear satisfied with their present envied superiority to all around them. Ambitious men are frequently vain, and sooner or later are always proud. Vanity rests chiefly on personal attributes. Pride, in addition to these, fastens on every thing which is supposed to create distinction.

This love of superiority is the most remarkable exercise of *covetousness;* and, united with the discontentment and envy by which it is regularly accompanied, appears to constitute the principal corruption of the human mind. It is impossible, without wonder, to observe the modes in which mankind exercise it; and the objects in which it finds its gratification. They are of every kind, and are found every where. We are proud and vain of whatever, in our own view, raises us above others; whether a gift of nature, an attainment of our own, or a mere accident. Our pride and vanity are excited by the possession of personal beauty, strength, or agility; by a lively imagination, clear judgment, and tenderness of feeling; by patrimonial wealth, and distinction of family; by the fact, that we live in the same neighbourhood, or even in the same country, with persons of eminence; that we know them; or even that we have seen them. No less commonly are we proud and vain of bodily feats, graceful motions, and becoming manners; of our gains; of our learning, invention, sallies of wit, efforts of eloquence, and exploits of heroism; of the employments to which we are devoted; of the taste which we display in our dress, entertainments, manner of living, building, and planting; of our industry, prudence, generosity, and piety; of

our supposed interest in the favour of God; nay, even of our penitence and humility. We are proud also of the town in which we were born; of the church to which we are attached; of the country in which we live; of the beauty of its surface, the fertility of its soil, and the salubrity of its climate. In a word, these emotions are excited by every thing from which a roving, eager imagination, and a corrupt heart, can elicit the means of personal distinction.

So far as these gratifications of pride are not in our possession, but are yet supposed to be attainable; or so far as they are supposed capable of being increased, when already possessed by us; they become objects of ambition. We eagerly covet them, and labour strenuously to acquire them.

In the humble circles of life, the first, and very frequently the last, aim of this desire of superiority is, to rise above those who are in the same humble station. To be the first in a village would, it is said, have been more acceptable to Cæsar himself, than to have been the second in Rome. Most men certainly raise their ambition no higher than this very limited superiority. Neither their views nor their circumstances permit them to grasp at more extensive and more elevated objects. Persons who move in a larger sphere, are apt to look down with contempt and pity upon the lowly struggles for pre-eminence, which spring up in the cottage, and agitate the hamlet, without remembering, that they are just as rational, and just as satisfactory, while they are less distressing, and less guilty, than their own more splendid and violent efforts to obtain superior consequence.

Minds of a more restless cast, of more expanded views, and more inordinate wishes, never stop voluntarily at such objects as these. The field of distinction is coextended with the globe. The means by which it may be acquired, are endless in their multitude and their application; and the prize is always ready to crown the victor. It cannot be wondered at, that minds of such a cast should therefore enter the race, and struggle vigorously to gain the prize.

I have remarked, that the means of distinction are endless in their multitude and their application. The objects from which it is immediately derived are, however, compara-

tively few. These are chiefly *wealth, splendour, learning, strength of mind, genius, eloquence, courage, place,* and *power.* To these are to be added, *those remarkable actions which excite the admiration and applause of mankind.*

Among the objects most immediately coveted by ambitious men, especially by those whose ambition has been peculiarly ardent and insatiable, *fame, splendour, place,* and *power,* have held the first rank. *Splendour* has been sought, as the means of fixing and dazzling the eyes of their fellowmen; *place* and *fame,* as being partly the means of distinction, and partly distinction itself; and *power,* as involving in its nature the most decisive and acknowledged superiority; as including place, fame, and splendour; and as furnishing all the earthly means of distinction. Into the chase for these objects, the great body of mankind have entered whenever they have found an opportunity. The humble have striven for little places, and the show which was intended to excite the stare of a neighbourhood. The aspiring have aimed at stations of high political consequence, and struggled to set the world agape. Men of limited views have confined their labours to the attainment of a character which should circulate with respect through a village; or be engraved with marks of distinction upon a tombstone: while the lofty minded have demanded a name, which should sound through the world, and awaken the wonder of future generations. The powers of subaltern magistracy have satisfied multitudes; while others have panted to grasp the sceptre of the monarch, and the sword of the conqueror.

The text is directed against this spirit in every form and degree. *Mind not high things,* says St. Paul to the Christians at Rome. The English word *mind,* appears very happily to express the meaning of the original term φρονουντες; *Give not your minds to high things with either attention or desire.* It will be easily seen, that this precept cuts up by the roots both the spirit and the consequences of *ambition.* If we pay not the regard here forbidden to the objects of ambition; it is plain that we shall neither cherish the spirit nor pursue the conduct which it dictates. It is hardly necessary to observe, that the precept is directed to *us*

with the same force and obligation as to the Christians at Rome.

The reasons for this prohibition are of the most satisfactory and sufficient nature. As proofs of this truth I shall allege the following:

1. *Ambition is a primary part of our rebellion against the law and government of God.*

In the first discourse on the tenth command I observed, that *an inordinate desire of natural good seems to be the commencement of sin, in a being originally virtuous. The two great branches of this spirit,* or the two great modes in which it operates, are, *ambition* and *avarice.* Of these, ambition is without a question the most universal and the most powerfully operative. It extends to more objects; exerts itself in a far greater variety of modes; occupies, so far as we can judge, the minds of much greater multitudes; is more restless, vehement, and, if possible, more craving. In every just consideration, it holds of course the primary place.

God has assigned his place and duties, his situation and enjoyments, to every intelligent creature. Impatience, with regard to this situation, and the duties which it involves; discontentment, with the enjoyment which it furnishes: and those inordinate desires for the stations and allotments of others, out of which impatience and discontentment spring; are, I think, evidently the first risings of the mind against its Maker. In these emotions the mind declares, that its Maker's government is, in its own view, unreasonable and unjust; and that his dispensations are such, as to make it justifiably unwilling to regard them with obedience and submission. Thus it arraigns the wisdom and goodness of JEHOVAH; and withdraws itself from allegiance to the Ruler of all things. Ambition then, the principal branch of this spirit, is the original rebellion against the government of God. Accordingly, the principal ingredient in the first transgression, was the ambition of our first parents to become *as gods, knowing good and evil.* A precept which forbids the assumption of so dangerous a character, and the pursuit of such fatal conduct, can need no additional proof of its rectitude. Still, that which is unnecessary to

produce conviction, may be useful for the purpose of making impressions on the heart. I observe therefore,

2. *That ambition is fatal to the happiness of the ambitious man.*

It is proverbially acknowledged, that envy and discontent are only other names for misery. Yet these wretched attributes are always attendant on ambition. No mind can be contented whose desires are ungratified. When those desires are eager, it will be still more discontented; and when he who cherishes those desires sees the good which he covets in the possession of others, he cannot fail to be envious. But the desires of an ambitious man are always ungratified. That they are eager, needs no proof; and eager desires invariably overrun the measure of the expected enjoyment. When it is attained therefore, it falls regularly short of the expectations and wishes; and thus the mind regularly fails of being satisfied, even when its efforts are crowned with success. The happiness of heaven, we are taught, will be commensurate to the utmost desires of its inhabitants. In this world ardent wishes were never satisfied; nor high hopes ever indulged without disappointment.

*The man who enters the career of political advancement,* never acquires any thing like satisfaction, until he sees with absolute conviction that he can gain nothing more. Then indeed he may sometimes sit down quietly: because there is nothing within the horizon of his view to rouse his energy to new hopes and new exertions. But his quiet is only the stagnant dulness left by disappointment; the paralytic torpor of despair. At first he aims at an humble office. He attains it; and with new eagerness raises his views to one which is higher. He attains this also; and, more eager still, bends his efforts to the acquisition of a third. The acquisition of this only renders more intense his thirst for another. Thus he heats himself, like a chariot wheel, merely by his own career; and will never cease to pant more and more ardently for promotion, until he finds his progress stopped by obstacles which neither art nor influence can remove.

In the same manner, *the candidate for literary eminence*

commences the chase of fame with wishes usually moderate. His first success however enlarges his views; and gives new vigour to his desires. Originally, he would have been satisfied with the distinction of being celebrated through a village. Thence he wishes to spread his name through a city: thence through a country; thence through the world; and thence through succeeding generations. Were sufficient means of communication furnished, he would be still more ardently desirous to extend his fame through the planetary regions; and from them to the utmost extent of the stellary system. Were all the parts of this immeasurable career possible, his mind, at the end of it, would be less contented than at the commencement; and would find, with a mixture of astonishment and agony, that the moment when the strife was terminated, the enjoyment which it promised was gone.

*In the pursuit of power*, this truth is still more forcibly illustrated. He who with distinguished political talents devotes himself to this acquisition, hurries with increasing vehemence from petty domination through all the grades of superior sway, until he becomes a Cromwell or a king. He who aims at the same object through a military progress, starts from a school in the character of a cadet, and pushes through the subordinate offices to the command of a regiment, a brigade, a division, and an army. With an ambition changing from desire into violence, from violence into rage, and from rage into frenzy, he then becomes a consul; a king, an emperor, a monarch of many crowns and many realms; and burns with more intense ardour to go on, subduing and ruling, until the earth furnishes nothing more to be ruled or subdued. Thus the ambition which at first was a spark, is soon blown into a flame, and terminates in a conflagration. Alexander subdued and ruled the known world. When he had finished his course, he sat down and wept, because there was no other world for him to conquer.

Thus it is plain, that the desires of ambition must ever be ungratified, because they increase faster than any possible gratification; and because they increase with a progressive celerity, expanding faster at every future, than at any preceding, period of enjoyment. Though *all rivers run into*

this *ocean*, still it *is not full*. Although millions continually crowd into this grave, still it says not, "*It is enough.*" As avarice would never cease to crave until it had gorged the riches of the universe, so ambition would never rest, until it had ascended the throne of the Creator.

But after all its accumulations, there will be wealth which avarice cannot grasp. After all its achievements, there will be heights which ambition cannot climb. Discontentment therefore, and murmuring towards the God who will not give the coveted enjoyments, and envy towards the created beings who possess them, will rankle in the insatiable bosom, and annihilate the comfort which might otherwise spring from the mass of good already acquired. Ahab on the throne of Israel, made himself miserable because he could not lay his hands on the humble vineyard of Naboth. Haman, an obscure captive, was elevated to the second place of power and distinction in the empire of Persia, comprehending at that time almost all the wealth and people of the known world. Yet at this height of power and splendour, in an assembly of his family and friends, while he was reciting to them *the glory of his riches, the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king;* when *he said, Moreover Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to-morrow am I invited unto her also, with the king;* this aspiring, haughty wretch could add, *Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.*

Our first parents became discontented with their very nature, and under the influence of ambition wished to become *as gods*. In this monstrous wish they have been often followed by their descendants. Several of the Persian emperors, Alexander the Great, and several of the Roman emperors, claimed divine honours, and demanded sacrifices and libations. The bishops of Rome also have arrogated to themselves the peculiar titles of Jehovah;* and have accordingly granted absolution of sins, and passports to heaven. Nay, they have abrogated the commands of God;

* Dominus, Deus noster, Papa.

substituted for them contrary precepts, ascended the throne of the Redeemer; assumed the absolute government of his church; permitted and interdicted its worships at their pleasure; claimed the world as their property; and declared all mankind to be their vassals. Beyond all this they have given openly and publicly, indulgences or permissions to sin. Thus has this *man of sin, this son of perdition, exalted himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.* Thus has he, *as God, sat in the temple of God, shewing himself to be God.*

With all these boundless demands of enjoyment however, this unvarying claim to the exclusive possession of natural good, *ambition never performed a single duty to God, or to man.* To a mind under the control of this passion, moral good has no charms, and never becomes the object of either complacency or desire. By such a man his own soul is neglected and forgotten; his fellow-men are neither befriended nor loved; and his God is neither worshipped nor obeyed. All his talents, and all his time, are employed with unceasing drudgery, solely to adorn, gratify, and exalt himself. Of this wretched idol he regards the earth as the shrine, and the skies as the temple. To this idol he sacrifices all that he is and all that he has; and demands from others every offering, which *he* can claim, and *they* can give. In homage to this idol, he makes every duty give way, and, so far as is in his power, bends all the interests of his fellow-men, and those of the universe; and sets it up as a rival to God himself.

In such a mind, how can the sense of duty be kept alive? How can he, whose attention is thus fascinated by personal greatness and distinction, whose soul is swollen by the consciousness of personal superiority, find either inclination or leisure, for so humble an employment, as the performing of his duty? In such a mind, how can repentance even begin? How can such a mind comprehend the necessity of relying on the Redeemer for acceptance with God? How can such a mind realize either the importance or the existence of moral obligation; or feel itself bound to obey the will of its Creator? Given up to sin, not from negligence only, from inconsideration, or heedless propensity, but from settled design, from ardent choice, from laborious contri-

vance, how can such a mind furnish room for the admission of humility, dependance, the fear of God, submission to his will, contentment, benevolence, equity, or compassion? But where these attributes are not, no duty can be performed.

*To his own family* indeed he may be thought to render some of those services which are obviously required both by reason and revelation. All men are commanded to *provide for those of their own house:* and for his own house the ambitious man actually provides; but not in such a manner, as either to perform his own duty, or benefit his family. He labours indeed to make them great, but not to make them wise, just, or good. His children he regards merely as heirs; and not as moral beings, placed during the present life in a state of trial, and destined in a future world to a state of reward. They are therefore taught, governed, influenced, and habituated to no duty, and to no real good. His only object is to invest them with a superiority resembling his own; that they may be decent companions to him while he lives, and inherit his grandeur after his death. They are therefore educated to be in all respects as bad, and in most worse, than himself. The great point of instruction which they receive, from the cradle to the end of his life, is, that all things human and divine are to give way to the pursuit of personal distinction. He who educates his family in this manner, cannot be believed to perform of design, a single parental duty.

As the ambitious man regards not the real interests of *his own family*, it cannot be believed that he will exercise any greater tenderness for those *of his fellow-men.* I have already remarked, that his mind can furnish no room for the admission of benevolence, equity, and compassion. Without these attributes, it is hardly necessary to observe, no duty to mankind can be performed.

*To* GOD, this lofty-minded being cannot be expected to render any part of that homage which he demands from all other beings to himself. The only language of his heart, while looking down from the height to which he imagines himself raised by a series of prosperous efforts, is, *I will ascend into heaven: I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I will*

*be like the* MOST HIGH. What submission, what obedience, what worship, can coexist with this language, and the thoughts from which it springs?

At the same time, *the ambitious man surrounds himself with a host of temptation.* The unclean spirit which originally dwelt in his heart, after having *gone out, and walked in dry places, seeking rest, and finding none;* after saying, *I will return to my house whence I came out;* has already entered it again, and *found it empty, swept, and garnished,* for his reception. Already has he gone, and taken *with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they have entered in,* and taken final possession of this convenient residence. His temper, his ruling passion, his course of life, holds out a welcome to every temptation; a call to every sin; a summons to every fiend. His mind is a cage of unclean and furious passions. His purposes demand for their accomplishment the continual intervention of falsehood, fraud, injustice, and cruelty, of impiety and irreligion.

The *sins* of such a man, instead of *following after* him, march before him in regular array, and fight, maraud, and plunder, to fulfil his designs, and to satiate the malignity of those evil spirits who have taken up their final habitation in his bosom.

3. *Ambition is the source of numerous and terrible evils to mankind.*

To comprehend the import of this truth, even in the imperfect manner in which it can be comprehended by *us*, it would be necessary to recur to the history of the human kind. In all ages and in all nations, this vast record has been little else than a delineation of the miseries which this malignant passion has produced. It has been a tale of sorrows, and groans, and sighs, and tears. The earth has rung throughout its immense regions with the melancholy murmur; and the walls of heaven have echoed back *mourning, lamentation, and woe.* In a short discourse like this, were it to be changed into a mere vocabulary, the very names of the various sufferings wrought by ambition could not be alphabetically recited. A loose and general specification of a very few of these evils, is all that can be accomplished, and therefore all that will be attempted.

Among the several adventurers in the field of distinction,

none appears so likely to be harmless, as the *candidate for literary fame*. Learning is an object naturally so useful, and the pursuit of it an employment so quiet, and so little ominous to the public peace, as to induce us very easily to believe that ambition, here at least, would be innoxious and unalarming. Should this however be our conclusion, we should find ourselves not a little disappointed. There has been a period, of which but too many traces still remain; a period in which it was fashionable, and therefore an object of ambition, to be a *freethinker*. Literary men of this description, trumpeted so loudly and so incessantly the learning, genius, and philosophy, of themselves and their coadjutors; vapoured with so much parade concerning their superiority to superstition, their independence, their liberality, and their exemption from prejudice; and promised so magnificently to rescue their fellow-men from the mists of error, and from the bondage of the mind, that the young, the ignorant, and the silly, dazzled by these splendid pretensions, became ambitious of this distinction, and without examination or conviction became freethinkers, in numerous instances, merely that they might have the honour of being united to this cluster of great men. The men themselves, finding that they had become great in the estimation of others, by means of these lofty pretensions, went on, and became still greater by increasing their pretensions. By the mere dint of study and reflection, they claimed to understand and teach the will of God concerning the duty and salvation of men; to explore the future designs of omniscience; and to prescribe rules of justice and propriety, according to which, if they were to be believed, God himself was bound to conduct his administrations to mankind. The Scriptures they not only discarded, but loaded with every calumny, and every insult. The Redeemer of the world they insulted, even more grossly than the ancient Jews had done; stained his character with vice and infamy; annihilated his mediation. In the mean time, they poured out a torrent of immoral principles, which they dignified with the name of *philosophy*, and which they proposed as proper rules to direct the conduct of men. By these principles the faith of mankind was perplexed, their morality unhinged, the distinction between virtue and vice destroyed, the ex-

istence of both denied, and the bonds of society cut asunder. Men of course were let loose upon each other, without the restraint of moral precepts, without the checks of conscience, without the fear of God.

The late revolution in France, that volcanic explosion, which deluged the world with successive floods of darkness and fire, had all its materials collected, and its flames kindled, by men of this description. It is not intended, that literary consequence was the only distinction sought by those who were the prime agents in producing this terrible shock of nature. The lust of power had undoubtedly its full share in bringing to pass this astonishing event. But the desire of fame had its share also. Had not the principles of the French nation been deeply corrupted, their morals dissolved, and their sense of religious obligation destroyed, by the pen of sophistry, it is incredible that they should at once have burst all the bonds of nature and morality, transmigrated in a moment from the character of civilized men into that of wolves and tigers, and covered their country with havoc and blood.

*In the career of political distinction,* the progress is usually more rapid, and the change more astonishing. In this career, men of fair moral reputation and decent life, when seized by the disease of ambition, lose suddenly all their former apparent principles, and are changed at once into office-hunters and demagogues. To obtain a place, or to acquire suffrages, they become false, venal, and treacherous; corrupt and bribe others, and are themselves corrupted and bribed; become panders to men of power, and sycophants to the multitude; creep through the serpentine mazes of electioneering; and sell their souls for a vote, or an appointment in the dark recesses of a cabal.

Their rivals also, they calumniate with all the foul aspersions which ingenuity can invent, malignity adopt, obloquy utter, or falsehood convey. The more virtuous, wise, and respected, these rivals may be, the more artful and incessant will be their calumnies; because from such men they feel the danger of defeat to be peculiarly alarming. Wisdom and worth therefore, are pre-eminently the objects of their hatred and persecution; and fall by the scythe of ambition, as by the scythe of death.

The people at large, in the mean time, are duped by every false tale which the cunning of these men enables them to invent; terrified by every false alarm; corrupted by every false principle; and misled into every dangerous and fatal measure. Neighbours in this manner are roused to jealousy, hatred, and hostility, against neighbours; friends against friends; brothers against brothers; *the father against the son, and the son against the father.* Truth and justice, kindness, peace, and happiness, fly before these evil genii. Anarchy behind them summons her hosts to the civil conflict. Battles are fought with unnatural rage and fell violence; fields are covered with carnage, and drenched in blood, until there are none left to contend, and the country is converted into a desert. Then despotism plants his throne on the ruins, and stretches his iron sceptre over the miserable relics of the nation. Such was often the progress of political ambition in the ancient and modern republics of Europe; and such, there is no small reason to fear, may one day be its efficacy on our own happy land.

When, instead of the love of place and political distinction, the passion for power and a determination to rule, has taken possession of the heart, the evils have been far more numerous, extensive, and terrible. These evils have been the chief themes of history in all the ages of time. It cannot be necessary that they should be particularized by me. In some countries of Asia and Africa, the candidate for the throne secures his possession of that proud and dangerous eminence, by imprisoning for life every heir, and every competitor; in others, by putting out their eyes; and in others, by murdering them in cold blood. Thus nations are by this infernal passion shut out from the possibility of being governed by mild, upright, and benevolent rulers. Ambition knows no path to a throne, but a path of blood; and seats upon it none but an assassin. The adherents to an unsuccessful candidate, although supporting their lawful prince, and performing a duty which God has enjoined, and from which *they* cannot be released, are involved in his ruin. Prisons are crowded with hundreds and thousands of miserable wretches, guilty of no crime but that of endeavouring to sustain the government, and resisting usurpation. The axe and the halter, the musket and the cannon, deso-

late cities and provinces of their inhabitants; and thin the ranks of mankind to make the seat of the tyrant secure. Not one of these unhappy wretches was probably worse, all were probably better men, than he who bathed his hands in their blood. Cæsar fought fifty-six pitched battles, and killed one million two hundred thousand human beings, to secure to himself the Roman sceptre. More than three millions of such beings have been slaughtered to place the modern Cæsar in the undisputed possession of his imperial greatness. To all these miserable sufferers, God gave life, and friends, and comforts, with a bountiful hand. Why were they not permitted to enjoy these blessings during the period allotted to man? Because ambition was pleased to put its veto upon the benevolent dispensation of the Creator: because to satiate one man, it became necessary to sacrifice the happiness of millions better than himself: because such a being could be pleased to see himself seated upon a throne, although it was erected in a stall of slaughter, and environed by a lake of blood.

## SERMON CXXXIII.

### MAN'S INABILITY TO OBEY THE LAW OF GOD.

*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*—ROM. VIII. 7.

IN a long series of discourses, I have examined *the law of God;* or *the preceptive part of the Scriptures.* This examination I have distributed into two great divisions: the first involving that summary of the law which Christ informs us contains the substance of all that is enjoined in the Old Testament: the second, including the decalogue; in which this summary is enlarged from two precepts to ten, and the duties which it requires are more particularly

exhibited. In both of these divisions I have considered, as I found occasion, those comments also of Christ, the prophets, and the apostles, which explain and enforce the various requisitions. The importance of these precepts does more than justify; it demands the extensive place allotted to them in this system, and the attempts which have here been made, to recommend them to the faith and the obedience of this assembly. The end of all useful speculation is practice. The use of all truth is ultimately, to regulate the conduct of intelligent beings. Those which are called the doctrines of the Scriptures, are necessary and profitable to mankind in two respects. The first is, that they involve immediate practical duties to a vast extent: the second is, that by teaching us our character, situation, and relations to God and each other, and the character of God, together with his relations to us, they shew us the foundation of all our duty, the reasons of it, the motives to it, and the manner in which it is to be performed. Most of these things are unfolded to us by the precepts of the Scriptures. They are also attended by some advantages which are peculiar to themselves. They declare our duty directly, and declare it in the form of law. An authoritative rule is given in each of them, announcing the will of the lawgiver, requiring our obedience, and prohibiting our disobedience, with rewards and penalties annexed to every precept; not indeed annexed to every precept in form; but so as to be always easily present to the eyes of those for whom the law was made. Instruction communicated in this manner, is attended by a force and efficacy of which all other teaching is incapable.

From these considerations arises the importance of inculcating much and often the preceptive part of the Scriptures from the desk. I well know that preaching of this nature has been opposed and censured by individuals in several classes of Christians. By Antinomians it may be consistently censured. As these men suppose themselves released from the law of God as a rule of duty, by the gracious dispensation of the gospel; they have considered the preaching of the law as useless, and even as mischievous. Such sermons as have urged the religious and moral duties of man, they have styled "*legal sermons;*" and those who

have delivered them, "*legal preachers.*" By this language they have intended to insinuate, or openly to declare, that the design of such preaching was the establishment of the doctrine, *that we are justified by works of law;* and the subversion of the evangelical doctrine, *that we are justified by grace through faith in the Redeemer.* That men have urged obedience to the precepts of the Scriptures with this design, I shall not question any more, than that the same men have pursued the same design by descanting on the *doctrines* of the Scriptures; and even on those which are purely evangelical. But that inculcating the practical duties which are required of mankind in the Scriptures, is in this sense legal preaching, I wholly deny. If this is its true character, Christ himself was a legal preacher. This glorious person, in his own discourses, has given these precepts, expatiated upon them, and urged obedience to them upon mankind, in a vast multitude of forms, to a great extent, and with unrivalled force and beauty. His sermon on the Mount is an illustrious and pre-eminent example of this nature.

This error, it must be owned, has not been confined to Antinomians. Zealous men, enrolled by themselves in other classes of Christians, and deluding themselves almost of course by the warmth and haste with which they decide concerning every subject, have entertained similar views, and adopted similar language. I would ask these men, to what purpose were the precepts of the Scriptures given? Why are they so often, so variously, and so forcibly, urged upon mankind? I would ask them, whether *all scripture is* or is not *given by inspiration of God;* and whether it is or is not all *profitable,* not only *for doctrine, reproof, and correction,* but also *for instruction in righteousness?* If this inquiry must be answered affirmatively concerning the Old Testament; it cannot be answered negatively concerning the New.

There are those who, on the contrary, confine most or all of their discourses from the pulpit to *the precepts* of the Scriptures; and either wholly or chiefly leave the *doctrines,* which they contain out of their preaching. Such preachers are equally censurable with their adversaries. No justification can be pleaded for the conduct of either. This

separation cannot lawfully be made by either. God has united them: they cannot therefore be disjoined by man. He who preaches *a part* of the gospel, cannot be said to preach the gospel *which Paul preached.* He may not indeed utter doctrines or precepts contrary to those of Paul. But he purposely avoids preaching the whole gospel of Paul; and although not guilty of denying or subverting either the truths or the injunctions given us by the apostle, yet, for mutilating the system, he merits severe reprehension.

Such preachers as profess the doctrines of the reformation, have been frequently charged with neglecting, to a great degree, the duty of inculcating *the morality of the gospel.* In solitary instances, the charge may have been deserved. That it is generally just, there is not a single reason to believe. I regard it as one of those general charges, which fall every where, and rest no where: the refuge of weak and unworthy minds, when they wish to indulge a spirit of bitterness by uttering severe imputations, and yet dare not fasten them upon individuals, for fear of being required to support them by evidence. So far as my knowledge of preachers extends, those who are sometimes called "*evangelical,*" inculcate the practical duties of mankind with more frequency, and more earnestness, than most other men. They do not indeed preach the morals of Heathen philosophy. But they preach the cordial, principled morality of the gospel, springing from the faith *without which it is impossible to please God.*

In my own view, this preaching is indispensable to mankind: and I cordially unite with the excellent Doddridge in saying, "Happy would it be for the church of Christ, if these important doctrines of practical religion were more inculcated; and less of the zeal of its teachers spent in discussing vain questions, and intricate strifes about words, which have been productive of so much envy and contention, obloquy and suspicion."

The next subject which offers itself to our consideration in a system of theology, is *the nature of that inability to obey the divine law, which is commonly acknowledged to be a part of the human character.* It is hardly necessary to observe, that scarcely any moral subject has been more a

theme of contention than this. It is no part of my design to recount the clashing opinions which have been formed concerning it, or the controversies to which it has given birth. Metaphysical discussion has for ages lavished upon it all its subtilties. As I neither claim the reputation nor enjoy the pleasure furnished by disquisitions of this nature, I shall not attempt to add any subtilties of my own to the mass which has already been accumulated. That ingenious men have, in several instances, thrown considerable light upon this difficult topic, I readily admit; and can easily believe, that it may be illumined still farther. It will be a prime part of my own design, not to environ it with darkness and perplexity. A plain tale is always attended by this advantage, that it may be easily understood. That which I shall utter, will, I hope, be accompanied by the important additional advantage, that it will be true.

In the text we are informed, that *the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* The words translated, *the carnal mind*, are το φρονημα της σαρκος, *the minding of the flesh. To mind is to regard with attention, respect, or desire.* Here it plainly signifies, that general course of desires which is exercised by mankind, in certain circumstances, towards certain objects; and which, in the preceding verse, is declared to be a state of spiritual death; or to terminate in future everlasting death. It is obviously the prevailing characteristical course of desire; the whole *minding of the flesh.* In the text it is declared to be *enmity against God.* What is intended by the flesh is explained to us by Christ, John iii. 6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* In other words, that which is born of man is possessed of the proper character of man. There are but two kinds of births mentioned in the Scriptures; and both these are expressed by our Saviour in this passage: viz. *the natural birth* and *regeneration.* All that which experiences the natural birth, and that only, is declared by Christ to be *flesh;* as that which experiences the spiritual birth, or regeneration, is declared to be *spirit.* The moral character here intended is strongly indicated by our Saviour when he informs us, that that which is born of the flesh only *cannot*, and that

*which is born of the Spirit can, see the kingdom of God.* This moral character is still more particularly delineated by St. Paul, Gal. v. 19—23. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such-like. Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.* It will hardly need proof, that the former of these classes of affections and actions, and such as these, are characteristical of man in his natural, unrenewed state; nor that the latter are exhibited by the Scriptures as constituting the true character of the children of God.

That the affections here mentioned *are not subject to the law of God,* will not admit of a question: since they are the very things forbidden by that law. That they cannot be thus subject while they continue to exist, is equally evident. Nor is it less certain, from the proofs given both by revelation and experience, that where the soul is not renewed by the Spirit of God, they continue to exist through life. Revelation teaches us, that, *unless a man be born again of the Spirit of God,* he will continue to sustain the fleshly or natural character while he lives; and that all those who *receive* Christ, and *become the children of God, are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* Experience shews also, with a regular testimony, that the native moral character of man continues, in the ordinary course of things, the same through life.

The nature of this inability to obey the law of God is, in my own view, completely indicated by the word *indisposition,* or the word *disinclination.* To elucidate this position I observe,

1. *That the divine law originally requires nothing but affection.*

*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Here love to God and man is the only thing expressly required. But it hardly

needs to be observed, that to be inclined or disposed to love God and our neighbour, is to possess that character, out of which all direct exercises of love spring of course. He therefore who possessed this character would, whenever his mind was active at all, exercise the affection which is here required. He would *be* and *do* all which the law enjoins, when considered in this point of view: for his disposition and his exercises would be the very things which are enjoined. Indisposition or disinclination to obey them, is the only difficulty in the way of obedience: and with respect to this subject, the only inability of man.

2. *When the divine law, in its various precepts, requires external actions, as well as affections; if our disposition accord with the precept, the action will of course be performed.*

I speak here of such actions as are in our power; for the law of God never requires any other.

For example, the children are required to honour their parents; particularly to support them, when from their age or infirmity they are unable to support themselves. It will not be doubted, that if children are disposed thus to support them, they will actually furnish the support. Men are forbidden to steal. The case, it may be confidently affirmed, was never known, and never will be, in which a man, inclined upon the whole to obey this command, or entirely disinclined to steal, was guilty of theft. Mankind are forbidden to murder. No man absolutely indisposed to murder, ever perpetrated this crime. As in these, so in all other cases; as with respect to these precepts, so with respect to all others; active obedience follows inseparably the disposition to obey. Wherever the inclination accords with the precept, the tongue, the hands, and the feet, conform of course entirely to its decisions.

3. *If an angel were to descend from heaven and reside upon the earth; he would, if he preserved his present disposition, obey the divine law as truly and as perfectly as he does now.*

If an angel were in this world, and were to possess exactly the same disposition which he possesses in the heavenly world; he would obviously feel and act in the same manner. In other words, he would be an angel still. Were

we to suppose his faculties lessened to the measure of ours, so that his understanding and other natural powers should in no respect exceed those of men; still, if his angelic disposition remained, he would perfectly obey the divine law. He would *love God with all the heart, and his neighbour as himself.* Should we suppose him to be lowered down still farther to the level of a child, and to possess no natural powers superior to those usually found in children; he would nevertheless, if he retained his angelic disposition, continue to be perfectly obedient. Should any person question this, let him remember, that the child Jesus is in the Scriptures pronounced to have been holy, and perfectly obedient from the womb; and throughout all the successive periods of his life. When his faculties were in the earliest stages of their progress, he as perfectly obeyed as he did after he began his public ministry. It cannot then be rationally doubted, that the angelic disposition, whatever might be the natural powers which it governed, would be, and would accomplish, all that is meant by perfect obedience to the law of God. Of course, the real and only reason why we perform not this obedience, is, that we do not possess such a disposition as that of angels. Our natural powers are plainly sufficient; our inclination only is defective.

4. *This disinclination to obedience is still so obstinate and enduring, that it is never relinquished by man, except when under the* renewing *influence of the Spirit of God.*

I have already observed, that those who *receive Christ,* and *become the children of God,* are declared by St. John, *to be born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;* and by our Saviour, *to be born of the divine Spirit.* The following passage from the prophet Ezekiel, chapter xxxvii. 24—28, will, I suppose, prove beyond a doubt, if not beyond a cavil, that this disposition is changed only by God himself. *For I will take you from among the Heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your*

*flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.* In this passage God declares, that he will gather the Israelites out of all countries into their own land; that he will cleanse them from all their filthiness; that he will give them a new heart and a new spirit; that he will take away their stony heart, and give them a heart of flesh: that he will put his Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in his statutes; that they shall be his people; and that he will be their God. When all this is accomplished, he says, *Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good; and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations.* Here the renovation of the human heart is described by sprinkling clean water; cleansing them from all their filthiness; giving them a new heart; putting in them a new spirit; taking away their stony heart; giving them a heart of flesh; putting the Spirit of God within them; and causing them to walk in his statutes. *All this,* God says, and that in the plainest terms possible, *he himself will do for them.* As consequences of it all God says, that they shall remember their own evil ways; shall loathe themselves in their own sight for their iniquities; and shall keep his statutes, and do them. As a farther consequence, he says, *that they shall be his people,* and *that he will be their God.* The nature of this renovation cannot here be mistaken. It consists in having a new heart, differing from that which they originally possessed, as a heart of flesh differs from a heart of stone. It is also a heart cleansed from the filthiness of sin, and inclined to walk in the statutes and judgments of God. It is also a heart which will induce him, to whom it is given, to remember his own evil ways, to loathe himself for his own iniquities, and to keep the judgments or commands of God, and do them. That this is the moral character exhibited every where in the Scriptures, as required by the law of God, as unpossessed by man in his original or natural state, and as given him in what is called the new birth, cannot, if the words be allowed to have their own meaning, or any meaning consistent with their use elsewhere in the Scriptures, be questioned. But of this change in the Israelites, at the period specified, God, in

the most determinate language, *declares himself to be efficient.* Of this change then, *he* certainly *will,* and *man* certainly *will not, be the efficient.* But if God will be the author of this change in the Israelites, he is unquestionably the author of it wherever it is experienced. Thus it is completely evident from the Scriptures, that the natural disinclination of man to obey the divine law is so obstinate, that it will not be overcome or removed by itself.

The proof of this truth from *experience* is, I acknowledge, less decisive than that from revelation; and is formed by an induction of too many particulars, as I observed in a former discourse, to be adduced on such an occasion as the present. The evidence furnished by reason and experience concerning this doctrine, must be merely *auxiliary.* Concerning subjects of this kind, concerning the agency of voluntary beings, the nature of causation universally, and the manner in which causes operate, metaphysically considered, our knowledge must be confessed to be very imperfect. It deserves our attention however, that the whole evidence furnished by experience goes to support this doctrine. All men of plainly acknowledged piety, so far as my information extends, have agreed in attributing their own renovation to the agency of the divine Spirit. To this attribution they have been led also, by a deep and solicitous attention to facts existing in their own minds. Although these facts have been greatly diversified in many respects, yet such men testify with a single voice, that they have been greatly alarmed on account of their guilt and danger; that, with an obvious or secret, but ultimately discovered, reliance on their own efforts, they have laboured with great earnestness to escape from both; that in the end they have clearly discerned all these efforts to be vain; that with a full conviction of their own insufficiency, they have cast themselves upon the divine mercy; realizing, that all their *sufficiency,* for the great purpose in view, must be *of God.* In this situation, they unitedly testify they found, commencing in them sooner or later, a disposition not perceptibly connected as an effect, with any efforts of their own, prompting them to loathe themselves for their iniquities; to confide in Christ as their Saviour; to love and fear God; and to *keep his commandments, and do them.* This disposition also, they unitedly declare, irregularly but really increased

as they advanced in life; while the propensity to disobedience lessened in the same manner. Now let me ask, is it credible, that all these men should radically err with respect to this subject? Is it credible, that they should all mistake the facts? Is it credible, that all should draw from them the same and yet a false conclusion? This supposition involves another, which must, I think, be reluctantly admitted by every religious man; *viz.* That God, in accomplishing the salvation of mankind, orders things in such a manner, as that those who are renewed are, to say the least, in almost all instances, deceived with respect to the author of their renovation; and *that,* while employed, not with integrity merely, but with deep solicitude, in exploring the state of their own minds and lives. According to this supposition, not only must their apprehensions concerning these important facts be false, and so far as I can see necessarily false, but all their emotions of gratitude and all their ascriptions of praise to their Creator, for his agency in effectuating this happy change in their character, must be also false and unfounded. These ascriptions were begun in the early days of religion. Prophets and apostles set the example. All that was morally good in themselves or in others, they attributed to the efficacious grace of God. In this attribution, Christians have followed them throughout every succeeding age. Thus, according to this supposition, a succession of false, and therefore indefensible, ascriptions of praise, has ascended to God from the body of pious persons in all the ages of the church; which yet they could not honestly, and in consistence with the best views which they were able to form, have failed to render.

At the same time no instances have occurred, in which men have by direct efforts of their own, without the efficacious influence of the divine Spirit, changed their moral character from sin to holiness. Not only have no such instances occurred which have been clear and unequivocal, and such as might be supposed to decide this point in favour of the supposition; but no collection of instances can be found which lean towards it, in a sufficient degree to render it probable. The whole stream of evidence, furnished both by the public and private history of experimental

religion, is against the opinion which I have endeavoured to disprove, and in favour of that which I have asserted.

Whatever may be the judgment formed by the spirit of controversy and cold metaphysical investigation, concerning this part of the subject, the doctrine will be readily admitted by all men who are afflicted by a deep sense of their guilt, and struggle hard to obtain a release from their sinful character; and by all who, having thus suffered and thus struggled, have felt themselves in the end actually released from the dominant control of a sinful disposition.

This doctrine is elucidated by experience also, in another manner. God, who requires our faith, repentance, and obedience to his law, has set before us numberless and most powerful motives to engage our compliance; motives which all sober men will acknowledge ought to persuade us; motives which are obviously of infinite import. Why do not men, who believe the gospel to be the word of God, and who have these motives presented to them clearly and forcibly from sabbath to sabbath, believe, repent, and obey? No answer, it is presumed, can be given to this question, which will accord with the supposition against which I contend.

5. *There is yet no more difficulty in obeying God, than in doing any thing else, to which our inclination is opposed with equal strength and obstinacy.*

A child is equally unable to obey a parent, against whom his will is as much opposed, as to obey God. This inability of children to obey their parents does not indeed commonly last through life. But while it lasts, the child can no more obey his parent than his Maker. In both cases, his inability is, I apprehend, of exactly the same nature. Sometimes also it continues while he lives. In such cases it is in all respects the same; equally obstinate, equally enduring, equally preventing him from doing his duty. If in this case his filial duty be urged upon him in its religious nature as required by the law of God; his opposition to perform his duty to God and his parent will be found exactly coincident; to be the same indivisible thing; and to be regarded with the same obduracy of heart.

These considerations will, to a considerable extent, explain many scriptural passages which relate to this sub-

ject. *No man*, saith our Saviour, *can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him.* The true meaning of this, he appears to me to explain in a parallel declaration to the Jews: *Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.* That he who is willing to come to Christ, will actually come to him, we are taught by Christ himself in the last chapter of the Apocalypse: *Whosoever will, or is willing* (ὁ θελων), *let him come, and take the water of life freely.* From these passages it is evident, that every one who is willing has the full permission of Christ to come to him, and partake of his blessings. Indisposition to come to Christ is therefore the true and the only difficulty which lies in our way. Those who *cannot* come, therefore, are those, and those only, who *will* not.

The words *can* and *cannot* are used in the Scriptures, just as they are used in the common intercourse of mankind, to express *willingness* or *unwillingness*. Thus we customarily say, that we cannot lend, or give, or assist, or pay a debt; when we mean nothing more, than that we are disinclined to these offices. Thus Samuel says to God, *How can I go? If Saul hear it he will kill me.* That Samuel could have gone to Bethlehem, if he had pleased, needs no proof. As soon as his fear of Saul, which had made him unwilling, was removed, he went without any difficulty. 1 Samuel xvi. 2. *How can this man give us his flesh?* said the Jews to our Saviour: John vi. 52; that is, *How can he be willing to give us his flesh? This is a hard saying; who can hear it?* John vi. 60. The answer is, every one that is willing. *Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?* Acts x. 47. *Can ye drink of the cup that I shall drink of?* Mark x. 38. *Can the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?* Mark ii. 19. *Can a maid forget her ornaments; or a bride her attire?* Jer. ii. 32. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?* Isaiah xlix. 15. *Can I hear any more the voice of singing men, and singing women?* 2 Sam. ii. 35.

In all these and the like instances, there is plainly nothing meant but inability of disposition, or a strong disinclination to the thing proposed. This is both the natural and universal language of men; found equally in their con-

versation and their writings. Children speak this language almost as soon as they begin to speak at all; and on every such occasion, utter it more naturally, than any other language. If the Scriptures would be intelligible to the great body of mankind, they must speak in the same manner. In this manner, therefore, God has directed them to be written.

## REMARKS.

1. *From these observations it is evident, that the disobedience of mankind is their own fault.*

Wherever we understand the nature of our duty, and are hindered from performing it by disinclination only, conscience and common sense pronounce us to be guilty. Thus they have ever pronounced. The decision has been given in all ages and countries, in every conceivable form of language and conduct, with a universal acknowledgment of its soundness, in the most definite terms, and with the highest solemnity.

2. *The degree of our inability to obey the divine law does in no case lessen our guilt.*

Certainly he who is *more* disinclined to obedience, is not less guilty than he who is *less* disinclined. Disinclination to obey, is our inability, and our sin. The greater our disinclination is, the greater plainly, not the less, is our sin.

3. *These observations teach us the propriety of urging sinners to immediate repentance.*

Their present state is a state of extreme guilt and danger. Of this it is the duty of every minister to produce, as far as may be, a strong conviction in their minds. Equally is it his duty to shew them, what is equally true, that they are under the highest obligations to repent immediately. They are now, they always have been, sinners. Every sin of which they have been guilty, demanded their immediate repentance. The only reason which they can allege for delaying their repentance, is the very reason why they have hitherto refused to obey the divine law: *viz.* their disinclination. But this is their sin: and sin is itself that which demands their repentance, instead of being a justification of their delay.

But it will be objected that the sinner cannot, or, in the very language of this discourse, will not, repent of himself. Why then should he be urged to immediate repentance? I will give the answer. So long as the sinner feels himself in any degree excused in delaying this duty, there is every reason to fear that he will be more and more at ease, and more and more disposed to delay. His views will be false and dangerous, and his conduct will eagerly accord with his views. But a full conviction of his duty will create in him a sense of danger, a conviction of his guilt, and a trembling anxiety concerning his future being. In this situation he will naturally, and almost necessarily, commence those efforts of solemn reflection, that deep attention to the word of God, and those attempts to supplicate for mercy, that conviction of his helplessness, and that strong sense of the absolute necessity of being sanctified by the Spirit of grace, which, in the usual providence of God, precede regeneration.

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# SERMON CXXXIV.

## FAITH AND REPENTANCE NECESSARY TO RESTORE US TO OBEDIENCE.

*And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you; but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house; testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.*—ACTS xx. 20, 21.

IN the preceding discourse I examined *the inability of mankind to obey the divine law.* It is evident, that if we are ever to be restored to divine favour, we must be restored to a spirit of obedience. *The manner in which we may obtain this restoration,* becomes therefore the next subject of our inquiry.

St. Paul, in the context, declares to the elders of the church of Ephesus, and appeals to them for the truth of the declaration, that he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God concerning their salvation. This he farther asserts he did by teaching them both publicly, and from house to house, at all seasons, and amid many temptations and sorrows. While he served the Lord with all humility of mind and many tears, he confidently avers, that *he kept back nothing* which was profitable unto them; or in other words, *taught* them *every thing* which was profitable. Of course he taught every thing which was profitable to mankind at large, as creatures of God and candidates for immortality. All this however he sums up in the second verse of the text in these two phrases: *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We are not indeed to suppose, that in the literal sense St. Paul taught nothing but faith and repentance to the Ephesian Christians. There can be no reasonable doubt that he taught the Ephesians generally what he taught the Christian world at large, and particularly the things contained in the epistle which he wrote to the church at Ephesus. The meaning of his declaration in the text is, I apprehend, merely that he had taught the doctrines concerning faith and repentance, *as pre-eminently the means of salvation.* That this view of the subject is just, is sufficiently evident from the context. Here the apostle teaches the elders, to whom this speech was addressed, many things beside these doctrines; and declares that he had heretofore instructed them in the great duty of *communicating good to others,* as the amount of all that which they owed to their fellow-men. The *religion* of the *gospel* is the *religion of sinners;* as the *religion* of the *law* is *that of virtuous beings.* The gospel is a scheme of restoration to beings who have rebelled against their Maker, and are condemned by the law which they have broken, to suffer the punishment due to their sins; but who yet, in consistency with the character and government of God, may be forgiven. It is a scheme by which these beings may be restored to their allegiance, to a virtuous character, and to the divine favour. If such beings are ever to be restored to the favour of God, if they are ever to obtain *the privileges of good subjects* of the divine

government, it is evident that they must, in some manner or other, be restored to *the character of good subjects*. In other words, if they are ever to possess the *rewards* of obedience, they must be previously possessed of the *spirit* of obedience. Whatever accomplishes for them, or becomes the means of accomplishing, this mighty change in their circumstances, must to them be of inestimable importance. As the gospel contains the religion of sinners in the situation above mentioned, this importance must belong to the gospel. In a particular manner must it be attributable to such doctrines or duties in the gospel, as are peculiarly necessary, and absolutely indispensable. From the place which faith and repentance held in the preaching of St. Paul, it is plain that *they* are the important things in question; the immediate and indispensable means of our restoration to obedience, and to the consequent enjoyment of the divine favour.

This truth is abundantly exhibited in many forms throughout the different parts of the New Testament. In Mark i. 14, 15, is contained the following declaration: *Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the gospel*; or, as in the Greek, *believe in the gospel*. In this passage we have evidently the substance of our Saviour's preaching; and this is *repentance and faith in the good tidings of the divine kingdom*, or the glorious dispensation of mercy to sinners through the Redeemer.

In Acts ii. 37, 38, we are informed, that the Jews *being pricked in their hearts* by the preaching of St. Peter, particularly by his pungent exhibition of their guilt in crucifying Christ, inquired of him and John with extreme solicitude what they should do to obtain forgiveness and salvation. St. Peter answered them, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins*. To be baptized in the name of Christ, is, as every one who reads the gospel knows, a public and most solemn profession of faith in him as the Redeemer of mankind. St. Peter therefore, in this answer, makes in substance the same declaration with that of St. Paul in the text.

When the jailer inquired of Paul and Silas, Acts xvi. 30, 31, what he should do to be saved, they answered, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, with thine house. Without faith,* St. Paul declares, Heb. xi. 6, *it is impossible to please God. He that believeth on the Son,* saith John the Baptist, John iii. 36, *hath everlasting life. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him. He that believeth on him,* saith Christ to Nicodemus, John iii. 18, *is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already.*

Christ, in Matthew ix. 13, declares the end of his coming to be, to *call, not the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.* When therefore sinners repent, the end of Christ's coming is fulfilled. In Acts v. 31, he is said by St. Peter to be *exalted as a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins.* Remission of sin is of course consequent upon repentance. In Acts xi. 18, it is said, *Then hath God granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life.* In 2 Cor. vii. 10, St. Paul declares, that *godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation. Except ye repent,* says Christ to his disciples, Luke xiii. 3, *ye shall all likewise perish;* and again, *There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.* Luke xv. 7.

In these passages, and indeed in many others, remission, life, and salvation, are indubitably and inseparably connected with faith and repentance. Sometimes they are connected with both conjointly, and sometimes with one. The account given of the subject, is however in all instances the same: because he who possesses one of these Christian graces, is of course and always possessed of the other. On the contrary, without these, life, remission, and salvation, are plainly declared to be unattainable. It is evident therefore that faith and repentance are the attributes supremely required by the gospel; the immediate fulfilment of its two great precepts; in the possession of which mankind are assured of eternal life, and without which they are exposed to eternal death. To produce and perpetuate them in the soul is visibly the great object, so far as man is concerned, which Christ came into the world to accomplish. In other words, they are that re-

tial obedience to the gospel to which salvation is promised and given as a *reward, not of debt, but of* the free and sovereign *grace* of God.

Having, if I mistake not, placed this truth beyond every reasonable doubt, and thus shewn the way in which mankind, although sinners, condemned by the divine law, and incapable of justification by their own works, may yet be gratuitously justified, return to their obedience, and be reinstated in the divine favour; I will now endeavour to explain the nature of this subject, and to exhibit the manner in which the doctrine is true.

The foundation of all religion is, the existence, character, law, and government, of God. This glorious and perfect being, as the creator, preserver, and benefactor, of the universe, is of the most absolute right the ruler of the work which he has made, and the lawgiver of all his moral creatures. The law which he has prescribed to them, demands all their duty, and regulates all their moral conduct. Man, who is of the number of these moral creatures, is placed under this law, and justly required by his Maker to *love him with all the heart, and to love his neighbour as himself.* In the progress of these discourses it has, unless I am deceived, been clearly shewn, that man has utterly failed of performing this duty; that he is therefore condemned by the law to the sufferance of its penalty; that the law knows no condition of pardon, escape, or return; that man cannot expiate his sins; and that, if left to himself, he must therefore perish.

In this situation, as has been heretofore explained, Christ interposed on the behalf of our ruined race; and made an atonement for our sins, with which the Father is well pleased. This atonement the Scriptures have assured us God has accepted; and having thus provided a method in which *he can be just, and yet justify those who* were sinners, is ready to extend the blessing of pardon and salvation to this apostate world.

Accordingly, Christ has announced himself to sinful men as *their* Saviour; and proffered to them deliverance, both from their sin and their condemnation. The conditions on which this proffer has been made are, *repentance towards God, and faith towards himself,* as the Lord and Sa-

viour of mankind. In order to understand, so far as we are able, the propriety and necessity of these conditions of our restoration, it will be useful to attend to the following considerations.

1. *Sincere, exalted, and enduring happiness, cannot be enjoyed by any beings except those who are virtuous.*

This great and fundamental truth, in that philosophy which explains the nature and interests of moral beings, has, it is believed, been completely evinced in this series of discourses. It has been shewn, that a sinful mind is at war with itself, its fellow-creatures, and its God; that it must of course be subject to reproaches of conscience, to perpetual disquiet, to consciousness of the divine anger, and to the loathing and contempt of all good beings. It has been shewn, that such a mind must be a prey to tumultuous passions, vehement desires, which are not and cannot be gratified, and endless disappointments in the pursuit of a selfish interest, which can never be promoted without sacrificing the glory of the Creator, and the happiness of his creatures.

It has been proved, that its chosen enjoyments are in their nature vain, transient, delusive, little, base, and contemptible; inconsistent with real excellence, dignity, and self-approbation; and incompatible with the well-being of others; whose interests are singly of equal importance, and united are immeasurably deserving of higher regard.

From these considerations it is unanswerably evident, that a sinful mind cannot be happy; for with such affections, and their consequences, happiness is plainly inconsistent. The mind which is not at ease within, cannot derive happiness from without. *A wounded spirit who can bear;* especially when wounded by the arrows of an angry conscience? If then God is pleased to communicate happiness to him who is a sinner; it is indispensably necessary, that he should first remove the sinful disposition whence all these evils immutably flow.

2. *The only possible method of removing sin from a moral being, is to make him the subject of evangelical repentance.*

So long as the soul loves sin, it must be the subject of

that vile and guilty character, which we denominate moral turpitude, depravity, and corruption; together with all its consequences. For the love of sin is pre-eminently this character. While this love continues, he in whom it exists will perpetrate of course all those which we customarily call sins, or useful actions. He will also love sin continually more and more; and perpetrate it with more and more eagerness, and hostility to God. From all the knowledge which we possess of moral character, it seems plainly to be its nature, whether virtuous or vicious, to become more and more fixed in its habits, and intense in its desires. So long therefore as the love of sin prevails in the mind, the situation of the sinner must be hopeless with regard to his assumption of a spirit of obedience, and his attainment of consequent happiness.

The repentance of the gospel is formed of *the hatred of sin, sorrow for it, a disposition to confess it to God, and resolutions to renounce it.* From this definition it is manifest, that evangelical repentance is the direct removal of sin from the soul of the sinner. By the hatred of sin, which it includes as a first principle, the soul is withdrawn from the practice of it. By the sorrow, it is warned of the danger and evil of returning to it again. By the confession of it to God, the soul is brought into near, full, and most endearing views of the glorious goodness of its heavenly Father in forgiving its iniquities; and most happily prepared to watch, and strive, and pray, that it may offend him no more. By its resolutions to forsake it, the penitent is fortified against future indulgences, and prepared to assume a life of filial obedience. In all these things we cannot, I think, avoid perceiving, that evangelical repentance is the direct and the only means of removing sin originally from the heart, and consequentially from the life, of a moral being; and that thus it is absolutely necessary to prepare men for obedience to the law of God, and a general conformity to his character and pleasure. To such beings as we are, it is therefore indispensable, if we are ever to become the subjects of real and enduring happiness.

3. *For this great end it is also necessary, that we should be united to God.*

The relations between the Creator and his intelligent

creatures, are not only near and important, but indispensable also to the happiness of such creatures. Out of them arises a great part of all the thoughts, affections, duties, and enjoyments, of which they are capable. These are also the foundations on which all other valuable thoughts, affections, duties, and enjoyments, rest; and are necessary to their existence, as well as their worth. In the relation of children only do we or can we apprehend the endearing and glorious character of JEHOVAH, as the common, most affectionate, and most venerable, parent of the virtuous universe; feel towards him the various filial affections; and perform the various filial duties, which are included under the general name of piety. In the same relation only can we enjoy the peculiar and pre-eminent happiness of loving and glorifying him, as *our Father who is in heaven.* In this relation only do we also receive and feel the unnumbered proofs of his parental tenderness and unlimited mercy.

As children of God, and by means of the filial views and affections which in this character we entertain, we begin first to understand and to feel that we are brethren. This character is the true inlet to all the fraternal regards of virtuous beings: and to the endless train of spiritual sympathies and social endearments which spring up in sanctified minds; and which with new strength, purity, and delight, will for ever grow and flourish in the heavens above.

But without union to God, no relation, whether natural or moral, can be of any use to ourselves. Without this union, the blessings flowing from these relations cannot begin. When minds do not coincide with him in their views, and are not united to him in their affections and character, *he* cannot with propriety give, nor *they* possibly enjoy, these blessings. The nearest relation to God, if unperceived, unfelt, and unacknowledged, is, in the apprehension of the soul which sustains it, nothing. It is the cordial, grateful sense of such a relation, the welcome, delightful recognition of it, which makes it the foundation of all this good. With such a recognition, the soul draws nigh to God with affections harmonizing with his pleasure, and with views coinciding with all his revealed designs. Separated from God, the soul can entertain no such views, and

can feel no such affections, towards him. Nor can it perform any duties, nor realize any rational or lasting enjoyment. In such a state of separation, it is a plant on which the beams of the Sun of righteousness cease to shine; and is of course chilled, shrunk, and destroyed.

4. *Faith in Jesus Christ is the only possible union between man and his Maker.*

God, in the covenant of redemption, has promised to receive, justify, and save for ever, all who are Christ's at his appearing: that is, all who become his by a voluntary surrender of themselves to him. But the only method, in which man ever does or can surrender himself voluntarily to Christ, is the exercise of faith or confidence in him as the Saviour of the world. This is the only method of becoming his, which is proposed to us by Christ himself. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,* is the sole language of the Scriptures concerning this subject. On this however I need not insist; because I have heretofore, if I mistake not, satisfactorily proved the doctrine at large. Still it may be useful to consider the nature of the subject with some degree of attention and particularity, as being capable, at least in my view, of illustrating the doctrine in an impressive and edifying manner.

Christ offers to save sinners, who are condemned and perishing, and are therefore utterly unable to save themselves. In this offer he declares himself able, willing, and faithful, to *save to the uttermost all that will come unto God by him.* Now it is impossible for us to come to him, or to God by him, unless we confide in this as his true character, and in the declarations by which he makes this character known to us. It is impossible for us to receive his instructions, as the means of knowledge and guidance to us in the path of duty and salvation; his precepts, as the rules of our obedience; or his ordinances, as the directory of our worship; unless we confide in the character of him who has taught them as a wise and faithful teacher. It is indispensable that we confide in him as a teacher, who knows, and who has told us, that which is true, right, and safe, for us, in these immensely important concerns. It is indispensable, that we believe in him, and trust in him, as vested with all the authority necessary to this character of a divine In-

structor; and regard him as certainly and fully disclosing the will of God concerning our duty and salvation. Unless we can confide in these things, we can never receive his instructions as rules either of our faith or of our practice. Without these things they would all dwindle at once into mere philosophy; mere advice; mere opinions; to obey which no person would or could feel the least obligation.

His atonement, in the same manner, would be nothing to us, unless we could cordially believe it to be efficacious, sufficient, and acceptable in the sight of God. It is only because we regard it as the atonement of so glorious, sufficient, and acceptable a person, that it possesses, in any sense, the character of an atonement. Accordingly, the Socinians, who consider Christ as a mere man, generally do, and if they would be consistent with themselves must, believe, that he made no atonement, but was merely a martyr, or witness to the truth.

Christ also requires us to commit our souls to his care and keeping; or, in other words, to become his by voluntarily surrendering ourselves into his hands, and looking for safety and happiness to his protection, mercy, and truth. This we cannot do in any other manner, nor by any other means, beside the exercise of confidence in him. Who would commit his everlasting wellbeing to a person, in whose kindness and truth, in whose power and wisdom, he did not confide? No man ever did or could commit himself or his interests, even in this world, to any person whatever, unless in the exercise of confidence. How much more difficult, how contrary to the first principles of our nature, how absolutely impossible, must it then be to commit our eternal interests; ourselves; our all; to a being in whom we do not entirely confide!

In the exercise of evangelical faith or confidence in the character of Christ, we become united to him, according to the declarations of the Scriptures, and according to all the views which reason can form of this subject, in a very near, most desirable, and most delightful union. He himself says to his disciples, John xv. 4, 5, *I am the vine: ye are the branches. Abide in me; and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.* St. Paul says, *We are*

*members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones:* and again; *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members one of another;* 1 Cor. xii. 27; and again, Col. i. 18, *He is the head of the body, the church.* The whole church also, both in heaven and on earth, is exhibited as gathered under *one head,* that is, CHRIST: Eph. i. 10. But our Saviour himself has given us the most sublime and glorious exhibition of this subject, which was ever made to mankind, in the following passage of his intercessory prayer: John xvii. 20—23. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one: as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me: that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me; and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.* This transcendent, this divine union, here exhibited to us as being of all possible importance, is and can be accomplished for mankind only by evangelical faith, or confidence in Christ.

5. *To the happiness of the soul it is also indispensable, that it should always obey its Creator; and of this obedience, evangelical faith is the only source.*

That obedience to God is necessary to the happiness of rational creatures, and that their uniform obedience is necessary to their uniform happiness, has been already proved under the first head of this discourse. If sin is fatal to happiness, and incompatible with its existence; it follows of course, that obedience is indispensable to happiness. Obedience and disobedience are the only two possible moral states of an intelligent being. If then disobedience creates misery; obedience of course creates happiness.

It may however be useful to consider this subject somewhat farther. It was shewn, in a former discourse, that God, and God only, knows what conduct will produce or ensure happiness; and that he only is alway, invariably, and infinitely, disposed to have that conduct exist. He only possesses the authority also, and the power, to require it of his creatures. Hence, he only can be the uni-

form and efficient director of his creatures to their real good. If then creatures are to be happy at all; it is indispensably necessary, that they obey his directions, and conform to his pleasure, as the only possible rule of right, the only possible way to real and universal good. All who wander from this path, are soon lost in a wilderness of error, distress, and despair; and will never find their proper home.

But we cannot obey God, except from confidence in his character, as a perfectly wise, just, and good teacher and lawgiver, who has instructed us in our true interest; a lawgiver, who has prescribed wise, just, and benevolent precepts, to regulate our duty. Unless we consider his precepts concerning all things to be right; we can never voluntarily obey them. Confidence therefore in the character of God, and in his instructions and precepts as flowing from that character, and partaking of his wisdom and rectitude, is the true and only possible source of that spontaneous obedience, which is acceptable to him, virtuous in us, and indispensable to all our real good.

Thus, if I am not deceived, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, are the substance of the means by which sinners are delivered from sin, reinstated in the character of children, restored to the favour of God, entitled to eternal life, and prepared for everlasting obedience and enjoyment in the heavens above.

## REMARKS.

1. *From these observations it is evident, that the objections made by infidels against evangelical repentance, as mean-spirited and contemptible, are groundless.*

Mr. Hume observes, that "self-mortification, self-denial, and humility, stupify the understanding, sour the temper, and harden the heart." Whatever produces these consequences by its proper efficacy is undoubtedly, *in its nature*, vicious or sinful, since the consequences themselves are plainly of a sinful nature. Self-denial, self-mortification, and humility, are all essential ingredients of genuine repentance; and without them, such repentance cannot exist. A just, clear, and humble sense of our guilt and unworthiness, is the very basis on which every thing else

contained in repentance is founded. With such a sense of our character, it is impossible, that we should not endeavour to mortify those inclinations, and deny ourselves that gratification of them, which together, have constituted our guilt, our odiousness, our debasement, and our danger. The humble thoughts which we thus experience, and the humble emotions by which they are accompanied, are the only just thoughts concerning our character, and the only proper emotions with respect to ourselves, so far as this character exists. Every opinion, every feeling, not accordant with these, is false and groundless; the silly dream of a vain and silly mind. A little self-knowledge, a very limited degree of candour, united with a very moderate self-examination, would convince any mind of the visionary nature of such opinions, and the absolute impropriety of such feelings.

Proud and vain men have, however, always despised humility, and regarded it as deserving their contempt. Still it is unquestionably the first honour which belongs to our nature, and the beginning of every thing else which is really honourable in man. All sin is shame; and let it be remembered, there is nothing shameful except sin. The very pride, the very vanity, from which these decisions of infidels spring, is itself gross sin, and not less shameful than the other exercises of the same spirit. All men see and declare this under the guidance of mere common sense; and, although each cherishes it in himself, every one hates, despises, and condemns it, in his fellow-men. How little would Christ have merited, how plainly impossible would it have been for him to have gained, that exalted estimation which he now holds in the minds of angels and of men, had he been a proud and vain, and not a meek and lowly, Redeemer! How infinitely distant is the character of this glorious person from that of Alexander, or that of Cæsar! The character of these men is fitly imaged by the smoke ascending from the bottomless pit: while the aspect of the Saviour is that of the sun shining in his strength.

But, aside from these considerations, repentance, however reprobated by haughty-minded men, is in itself real good, and essential to all other real good. It is the only possible removal of sin; the worst of all evils, and the source of

every other evil. It is the only possible security against the resumption of that guilty, debased, and shameful character. It is the commencement of virtue in the soul; and indispensable to its very existence. It is real dignity in itself; and the beginning of all real dignity. It is plainly the only solid basis of peace of conscience, and well-founded self-approbation. By Hume it was seen, so far as he saw it at all, only at a distance; and through the false optics of philosophical pride. It was therefore erroneously seen, understood, and represented. Neither this writer, nor his companions in infidelity, appear to have discerned the distinction between the repentance of a mercenary slave, regretting his faults merely from the expectation of punishment; and the ingenuous contrition of a child, sorrowing for his disobedience, loathing his guilt, and returning with a new and better heart to his filial character and duty.

2. *We see how groundless the objection of Godwin is to the Scriptures;* viz. *That they lay an improper and unwarrantable stress on faith.*

Faith, it is well known, is the great condition of acceptance with God proposed in the gospel: as unbelief is of final rejection. To this scheme Godwin objects, as unreasonable and absurd. But if the account here given of this attribute be just, the absurdity will be found to lie, not in the scriptural scheme, but in the objection. It has, if I mistake not, been shewn in this discourse, that without union to God, and cordial obedience to his will, we cannot enjoy rational and enduring good; and that, without evangelical faith, no such union, and no such obedience, can exist. The faith of the gospel is therefore of all possible importance to man; of as much importance as his whole well-being, involving every thing which is desirable or useful. Had the Scriptures therefore laid less stress upon this subject; it would have been an unanswerable objection to the religious system which they contain.

The contrary character of *distrust*, which is plainly the native character of man, is obviously a complete separation of any intelligent being from his Maker. It is impossible, that such beings should exercise any of those affections with which alone they can glorify their Creator, or enjoy

ally obey him, so long as they distrust his moral character. Equally impossible is it, that they should possess the enjoyment, which alone can fill the wishes, or is suited to the nature, of an immortal mind. The distrust of a friend makes us unhappy *here*. The distrust of God would make us miserable *for ever*.

The faith of the gospel deserves, then, all the importance which is given to it by the Scriptures. The place which it ought to hold in the estimation of all men, is pre-eminent. By every preacher it ought to be insisted on, by every man it ought to be pursued, as of all possible consequence to obedience and salvation. The preacher who does not thus inculcate it is unfaithful: the man who does not acquire it is undone.

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# SERMON CXXXV.

## THE MEANS OF GRACE.

ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE. PROOFS THAT THERE ARE SUCH MEANS.

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*For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*—1 COR. IV. 15.

THE preceding sermon finished the observations which I originally proposed to make concerning *the law of God; the inability of man to obey it;* and *the means of his restoration to obedience, and to the consequent favour of God.*

The next subject, in the order of these discourses, is, *The means, in the application of which, men usually obtain faith and repentance, and thus become entitled to eternal life.*

Before I begin the discussion of this subject, I request my audience to call to mind the import of the last discourse, together with others, which have been delivered concerning

the same subjects. I wish it to be remembered, that, in my view, *evangelical faith and repentance are indispensable to the existence of any moral good in the soul of man, and are in all instances the beginning of that good.* Particularly, they are the commencement of obedience to the law of God; the foundation of real and enduring happiness to such as are or have been sinners; and are obviously the *immediate duty* of all men. He therefore who does not teach these doctrines, omits, in my apprehension, the soul and substance of the gospel.

With these things premised I observe, that in this passage of Scripture, St. Paul declares himself to have *begotten* the Corinthian Christians in Christ, and thus to have been *a cause* of their being regenerated, or born again. That the new birth is the birth here referred to, will not be disputed. Nor can it be questioned, that St. Paul was, in some manner and degree or other, concerned in effectuating it, without a peremptory denial of his veracity and inspiration. It is farther declared by him, that *he had begotten them through the gospel.* It is therefore certain, that *the gospel* also *was,* in some or other manner or degree, *concerned in effectuating the new birth of the Christian Corinthians.*

If the apostle, as a minister of the gospel, was concerned in effectuating the new birth of the Corinthian Christians, it will follow, by unobjectionable analogy, that *other ministers are also, in the like manner or degree, concerned in effectuating the regeneration of such as become Christians under their ministry.* Farther, if the gospel was thus concerned in the regeneration of the Corinthian Christians, then it is also equally concerned in that of Christians in general.

But if ministers of the gospel be in any manner or degree concerned in *producing* this change in the moral character of men, they are just so far *means* of producing it. Of consequence also they are, according to that course of divine providence in which they are thus instrumental, *necessary to this change,* just so far as they are means of producing it.

It is not here intended, that God could not if he pleased produce this change in the human character, without those

or any other means. Nor is it intended, that in some cases he does not actually thus produce it. It is unquestionably in the power of God to effectuate this change, with infinite ease, in any manner which he shall think proper. Nor have we any proof, that he has not, in many instances, renewed men, without connecting the renovation with any means whatever. But it is here intended, that this is not the usual course of his spiritual providence; and that in that course means are really employed to bring men into the heavenly kingdom. It is farther intended, that *these means are so far necessary, as that, without them, this important end would not, in the ordinary course of providence, be accomplished.*

If God has thought proper to conduct his spiritual providence in such a manner, as to constitute it a regular and orderly course of events; then *our own* views of it are to be formed so, as to accord with this constitution, and to admit it as a part of the evangelical system. Our conduct also is to be referred and conformed to this constitution. With it we are to expect other things to accord. Particularly, we are to expect salvation for ourselves and others according to this plan, and not according to a different one. Just views of this subject will therefore be easily seen to claim no small importance in the estimation of those who wish to be saved.

In the particular investigation of this subject, I propose,

I. *To shew, that there are means of grace;*

II. *To shew what they are;*

III. *To explain their influence;* and,

IV. *To answer the principal objections to this scheme of doctrine.*

I. *I shall attempt to shew, that there are means of grace.*

This position I shall endeavour to establish in the following manner.

1. *I allege as evidence of its truth the direct declarations of Scripture.*

The text is an explicit and forcible declaration of this nature. In this passage the apostle asserts, in the most unequivocal manner, that *he* was a cause, and *the gospel* another, of regeneration to the Corinthian Christians: not a

cause in *the efficient* sense, but *the instrumental.* In other words, he declares, that himself and the gospel were *means* of their regeneration. It cannot be said here, that the apostle and the gospel were to these Christians means of *edification;* or of *their advancement in holiness,* after they were regenerated. This subject is not even hinted at in the passage. The *birth* is not any part of the growth subsequent to itself. *To beget* is not to nourish or cause to grow. It is to contribute to the original existence of the thing begotten, and not to its subsequent improvement. The apostle and the gospel then contributed to the regeneration of these Christians, and were means of bringing it to pass.

In Philem. 10, St. Paul declares the same truth in the same language: *I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.*

In the Epistle of St. James, chapter i. 18, that apostle says, *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we* (the first converted Jews) *should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.*

On this passage I shall make two remarks. The first is, *that St. James uses the language to denote the regeneration of the Jewish Christians, which St. Paul uses to denote that of the Corinthian Christians.* If then the terms of St. James denote regeneration; which will not be denied; they denote the same thing in the text. But the passage in St. James is unquestionable proof, that God regenerated the persons spoken of in this passage. Equally undeniable proof is furnished by the text, that St. Paul was either *the agent* or *the means* of regeneration to the Christians in Corinth. But God is the only agent or efficient cause of regeneration. If we deny the fact, that St. Paul was the means of regeneration to these persons, as asserted in the text, we must, according to the same principles, deny the fact that God was the efficient cause of regeneration, as asserted by St. James. The same rules of construction will oblige us to admit both these propositions, or to reject them both. The language is the same; and that it ought to be interpreted by the same rules of construction cannot be doubted.

The second remark is this. *St. James declares, that God had regenerated him and his fellow-Christians by the word*

*of truth;* that is, *by the gospel.* The gospel was therefore certainly the means of accomplishing this event.

St. Peter, in his first Epistle, chap. i. 10, speaking of himself, and those to whom he wrote, says, *Being born again,* or regenerated, *not of corruptible seed, but by the word of God, who liveth and abideth for ever.* In this passage St. Peter declares, that Christians are born, or regenerated, δια λογου, *by means of the word* of God. Of course he declares, that they were not regenerated without the instrumentality of the word of God. What is true with respect to this subject, of the Christians to whom St. Peter wrote, will not be denied to be true of Christians universally.

In 1 Tim. iv. 16, St. Paul says, *Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.* That Timothy would in fact both save himself and those who heard him cannot be denied, unless we charge St. Paul with falsehood. But if Timothy was not in this case an instrument, or a means of salvation to them; the declaration cannot be true. For God is the only efficient cause of salvation to any man.

In Rom. iii. 1, 2, St. Paul says, *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.* In this passage St. Paul declares, that the Jews had much advantage over the Gentiles; and that this advantage lay *chiefly* in the fact, *that unto them were committed the oracles of God.* If the possession of the oracles of God was of great advantage to the Jews; we naturally ask, in what respect was it an advantage? Plainly in this; that the oracles of God contributed, or were capable of contributing, to their salvation, and consequently to their regeneration. Of what possible advantage could the oracles of God be to unconverted men; and of such only is the apostle here speaking; unless they contributed in some manner and degree or other to their conversion? This question, it is believed, admits of no answer.

In Rom. x. 14, the same apostle says, *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard; and how shal lthey hear without a preacher?* Every person at

all acquainted with language knows, that these questions have exactly the same import with that of strong negative declarations; and that the apostle has here in the most forcible manner asserted, that men *cannot call on him whom they have not believed; nor believe in him of whom they have not heard; nor hear without a preacher.* In other words, he declares the preaching of the gospel to be, in the ordinary course of providence, indispensably necessary to the faith of mankind in Christ, just as that faith is indispensable to the invocation of his name in prayer. That the apostle understood these questions in this manner, is unanswerably evident from his own conclusion, subjoined in the seventeenth verse: *So then faith cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of God.*

These passages it is believed are sufficient, if any passages can be sufficient, to decide the question. It would be easy to multiply quotations of the same import to a great extent: for this is the common language of the Scriptures. But as a long course of quoting and commenting necessarily becomes tedious, I shall conclude this part of the discussion, by repeating, in a very summary manner, a few other passages and phrases which directly indicate in other forms the same truth.

The Scriptures are called the *word of salvation;* the *word of life;* the *word of faith;* the *word of wisdom;* the *word of knowledge;* the *word of reconciliation;* and the *sword of the Spirit.* None of these appellations, it is apprehended, could be given to them with propriety, unless they were in truth means of salvation to men. They are called *the word of God, which inwrought effectually in the Thessalonians, when they first received it.* 1 Thess. ii. 13. They are said by God himself, speaking to the prophet Jeremiah, to be *as a fire, and as a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces.* Jer. xxiii. 29. They are asserted by St. Paul to be *quick, or living, and powerful; sharper than any two-edged sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit; and to be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* Heb. iv. 12. Our Saviour says to the Jews, *It is the Spirit that quickeneth;* and to explain his meaning subjoins, *The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

It is said, that *when the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them who believe.* 1 Cor. i. 21.

St. Paul declares the gospel *to be the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.* Rom. i. 10.

From these passages it is evident, that the Scriptures, in their customary language, declare themselves, particularly as preached to mankind, by the means of salvation.

2. *I argue the same doctrine from the commission given by Christ to his apostles.*

This commission is recorded, Matt. xxviii. 19, in these words; *Go ye, disciple,* that is, make disciples of, *all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

The word μαθητευσατε, rendered *teach* in the common translation, is literally rendered *disciple.* Διδασκω is the proper term to denote *teaching.* Μαθητευω denotes, *to make a person a disciple in the same sense in which the apostles and their contemporary Christians were disciples of Christ.* A disciple, as the term is used in the New Testament, is a person who receives, approves, and voluntarily conforms to, the doctrines and precepts of his instructor. Such were the disciples of the Pharisees: such were those of John the Baptist: and such were those of Christ. Christ, it will be admitted, commissioned the apostles to make real disciples of those to whom they preached, and not disciples in pretence and profession merely. But every real disciple is regenerated.

The nations to whom the apostles were sent, were Jews and Heathen; and of course were unbelievers and sinners. Christ, therefore, commissioned the apostles to make disciples of unbelievers and sinners. It will not be denied, that he commissioned them to do that which, in the ordinary progress of things, could be done; and which they, so far as they faithfully obeyed his commands, did actually accomplish. The apostles therefore did really, in the proper sense, make disciples of these sinners.

Accordingly St. Paul says, that he desired to *have fruit among the Romans, as he had among the other Gentiles.* Rom. i. 13. He speaks of himself and Apollos as ministers *by whom,* that is, by means of whom, *the Corinthians*

*believed.* 1 Cor. iii. 5. He says, that *he and his companions received grace and apostleship, for the obedience of faith among all nations.* Rom. i. 5. St. Peter, Acts xv. 7, says, that *God had chosen, that the Gentiles by his mouth should hear the gospel and believe.* Every where also, in the book of Acts, both Jews and Gentiles are exhibited as having believed, and turned to God, by means of the preaching of the apostles and their coadjutors.

Thus the commission was fulfilled exactly according to its tenor; and the gospel actually became the means of faith and salvation to those to whom it was preached.

But this commission was given *to all succeeding ministers,* as well as to the apostles; and is the very authority under which they now preach, and perform all the other duties of them inisterial office. All that was here said to the apostles is in the very same sense said to *them.* It is equally their business and duty, to make disciples of mankind, wherever Providence presents them an opportunity; and to baptize them when made. Of course *they* as really make disciples of unbelievers and sinners; and are as really means of faith and salvation to mankind.

The very fact of giving this commission is in itself decisive proof of this truth. It was undoubtedly given with sincerity and benevolence on the part of Christ. Of course it was intended by him, that the design expressed in it, was really formed in his mind, and will be faithfully accomplished. This design is completely expressed in the commission itself. As the apostles were directed to disciple all nations, or to make disciples every where; so it was the design of Christ, that disciples should every where be made by them. In this business they were to have a real agency. It therefore follows irresistibly, that they had a real agency in it; such an agency as that, without their exertions, these men would, in the established course of things, never have become disciples.

3. *The same doctrine is proved by the whole course of facts relating to the existence and progress of Christianity in the world.*

Wherever the gospel has been preached and read, mankind have actually been made disciples of Christ. In every age and in every country to which the gospel has come,

there have been many such disciples. In those countries, on the contrary, where the gospel has not existed, such disciples have not been made; or, at least, evidence of their discipleship has not been furnished to their fellow-men. I speak here, it will be remembered, of the ordinary course of God's spiritual providence. That exceptions to this assertion may have existed, I am not disposed to deny. That they must have been comparatively few, is, I think, clearly evident from the fact, that no satisfactory reasons have appeared, even to the mind of charity itself, to believe them numerous. If God has pursued, in countries unenlightened by the gospel, a different system of dispensations from that which we have been contemplating, it must be admitted that we have no evidence of this fact; or at least none which can be pronounced satisfactory. The Scriptures certainly give us very little information of this nature; and the history of mankind furnishes still less. Without limiting the mercy of God, or attempting to investigate his spiritual providence with respect to nations who have not the gospel, it may safely be concluded, that the instances which they furnish of apparent renovation are very few.

A benevolent man, who casts his eye over the western wilderness, and surveys with attention the moral conduct of its inhabitants, will find very little of this nature to satisfy his wishes or his hopes. Independently of the moral effects produced upon these nations by the labours of missionaries, he will find sin prevailing and ravaging, in all the forms of turpitude compatible with their circumstances, and in every degree not forbidden by their poverty, ignorance, and imbecility. Our Saviour has taught us, that we are to discern the character of men by their fruits. This equitable and decisive rule of judging, is no less applicable to these nations than to ourselves. But what are the fruits produced by these men? Certainly they are not such as are *meet for repentance;* such as spring from confidence in God; such as indicate even remotely the influence or even the existence of real virtue. After the most charitable and indulgent allowance for their ignorance; after all the palliations which the most benevolent mind can elicit from their moral disadvantages; their fraud, treachery, cruelty, pride, implacability, and revenge, present a picture of depravity which

it is impossible not to understand and acknowledge. No penitents in the mean time are visible among them. No symptoms of reformation are found. On the contrary one unvarying, sluggish, gloomy stream of corruption, appears to have flowed heavily onward from remote generations to the present hour: and to wind its Lethean course through all these nations, wherever and however situated.

On the ground once inhabited by these people, the New England colonists have dwelt almost two centuries. Among them religion has generally prevailed. The proof is that which has been already mentioned. They have brought forth the fruits, specified in the gospel as evidences of a virtuous character, in instances whose number it would be difficult to limit. Whence this mighty difference in nations, planted on the same soil, and living under the same climate? The only satisfactory answer is, that the people of New England have possessed the gospel and its ordinances; have built churches; settled ministers; attended the public worship of God; read the Scriptures; and educated their *children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* None of these things were possessed or done by their savage predecessors. In a word, the people of New England have had the gospel: the savages have not.

In those countries also where the gospel has been enjoyed, and disciples have actually been made, all, or almost all, persons of this character have become disciples by means of the gospel itself. Such persons, with scarcely an exception, probably without an exception, when conversing on their regeneration, declare, that every thing in their own minds, which yields them consolation or hope, is, in their view, fairly referable to the truths of the gospel, presented to them in some form or other. A vast multitude date all their hopes from the preaching of the gospel; and feel completely assured that *faith*, if it has come to them at all, *has come by hearing;* as *hearing* has *by the word of God.* Others attribute this blessing to the indirect influence of preaching, operating upon their minds through a succession of events. Others ascribe it to an early religious education, making deep impressions on their minds in the happy period of childhood. Others still attribute it

to the reading of the Scriptures; to the reading of religious books; to the religious conversation of good men; or to the life and conduct of such men. In these several ways the truths of the gospel are often exhibited with peculiar strength, beauty, and efficacy. The mode in which they are conveyed to the mind is of no other importance, than as it renders the truths themselves more explicit, or more impressive. The truths are the substance and the soul of this interesting process.

As the language of all such persons concerning this subject is the same; it must, I think, be admitted to be true. Their number has been too great to allow the suspicion, that they can all have been deceived. They have lived in so many ages and countries, have been of so many different characters, have received so widely different educations, have lived in so widely different circumstances, and have entertained, in other respects, so widely different opinions, as to render it incredible, that they all should have been prejudiced concerning this subject, and impossible that they shoud have united in exactly the same set of prejudices. At the same time multitudes of them have been eminently distinguished for wisdom, candour, and self-knowledge. It cannot be reasonably supposed, that immense numbers of such men should, with respect to such a subject, be uniformly deceived in exactly the same manner. Beyond all this it appears, at least to me, to be an indefensible imputation upon the character of God to suppose, that he would in this case leave his children to false apprehensions, and suffer them universally to believe, that this mighty blessing came to them all in a way which was imaginary, and by means to which it was in no degree attributable.

From these considerations it may, I think, with the highest probability, be concluded, that mankind are *sanctified through* or by the means of *the truth* of God.

To all that has been here alleged it may however be objected, that in the Scriptures *our sanctification*, particularly *our regeneration, is ascribed, directly and solely, to the agency of the Holy Ghost;* and that the doctrine contended for in this discourse, *contradicts* this part of the scriptural scheme.

To this objection I answer, that the doctrine for which

I contend, is as plainly asserted, and in as many passages of the Scriptures, as that which is alleged in the objection. If then we deny the former of these doctrines, we shall do violence to as many and as plain scriptural declarations, as if we deny the latter. Our dislike of the doctrine asserted in this discourse, will in no degree justify us in rejecting or contravening those passages of Scripture in which it is asserted. They stand upon their own basis; the authority and inspiration of that divine Spirit who, while he challenges this agency to *himself*, has been pleased to attribute also this instrumentality to *his word*. His declarations we are bound to receive as we find them; and cannot alter the obvious meaning with any better warrant, than we can challenge for altering the words which contain that meaning.

It may be farther objected, that *this doctrine robs God of his peculiar glory in regenerating the soul of man.*

To this I answer, that we are at the best incompetent judges of this subject; and are therefore unable to determine satisfactorily, in what manner God will be most glorified. If God has thought proper to give us such an account of the subject as has been here specified, it will be found in the end, that he is more glorified in the manner conformed to these declarations than in any other. The Psalmist, under the unerring influence of inspiration, says to God, *Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.* Should it prove one of the ways in which God magnifies his word, that it is constituted the means of regeneration to mankind; there can be no reasonable doubt, that it will be found in the end, perfectly consistent with the most perfect glorification of his name.

The truth however is, that neither of these answers is at all necessary to satisfy us concerning these objections. The Spirit of God is in truth the only agent in renovating man; or in other words, the only efficient cause of his renovation. This however he would be in as perfect a degree, if he were supposed to employ means in accomplishing this change of character, as if he were supposed to accomplish it without them. The supposition that an agent, if he employ means to effectuate his purposes, will, on this account, cease to be, or be at all less, an agent, is built upon no known principles of truth or evidence.

The farmer and gardener turn their soil and plant their seeds; the rain descends upon them, and the sun shines; but all these things do not make them spring up and yield their increase. God must still interpose with his creative power, to produce these desirable effects; or a crop will be expected in vain. God therefore is the sole agent and author of the crop; yet the farmer and the gardener, the ground and the seed, the rain and the sunshine, are all means of its existence. Without these means, there would, according to the established order of things, be no crop. Of course they are means of its existence, and means indispensable.

It may be said, *that these cases are not similar*. If this should be said, it would, I think, be said rashly; for Christ himself, St. Peter, St. James, and St. Paul, have all chosen this allusion to illustrate this very subject. See the parable of the sower. See also 1 Cor. iii. where Paul declares himself to have planted, Apollos to have watered, and God to have given the increase.

With regard to the other objection, it is obvious that, so far as we can see, the glory of regenerating man is all ascribed to God, and all ascribed in the manner most honourable to him; is attributed to his Spirit as the efficient cause, and to his word as the means. If he has in fact, as if I mistake not I have proved, declared, that this is the manner in which he has chosen to accomplish this work; we need not fear, that in giving this account of it we shall detract from his character.

## REMARKS.

If the scheme of discourse which has been here exhibited is just, it will follow, *that the gospel is to be preached to sinners.*

My audience may perhaps wonder, that any evidence should be thought necessary to prove this assertion. If I am not misinformed however, the assertion has not only been questioned, but denied. That such should have been the fact is certainly wonderful, in my view, as well as in that of others.

When the gospel was first preached by Christ, the whole world, with very few exceptions, was in a state of sin. The

Gentiles were so generally of this character, that as a body they were styled by St. Paul, *sinners of the Gentiles.* Gal. ii. 15. To the Gentiles, however, Paul was sent directly by Christ to preach the gospel. The extraordinary commission of this apostle deserves to be here repeated. *Delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee; to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in me.* Acts xxvi. 17, 18.

Here it is to be remarked, that St. Paul was sent to the Gentiles, not only to preach the gospel, and *to open their eyes,* but *to turn them* also *from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* Accordingly he *was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision; but shewed first to them of Damascus and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.*

These declarations, made by St. Paul, are unanswerably evinced to be true by the history of his life. In the very manner here recited, he preached to both Jews and Gentiles the glad tidings of salvation; and persuaded men every where to renounce and forsake their iniquities; and thus actually opened their eyes, and turned them from darkness to light.

The beginning of the preaching of Christ, as recited in the Gospel according to St. Mark, is in these words: *The time is fulfilled: the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the gospel.* The people therefore whom he addressed, had not hitherto repented nor believed. Of course they were sinners. In the whole history, contained in the Gospel and in the Acts, there is not, so far as I recollect, a single instance recorded in which we have any satisfactory proof, that even an individual sinner was regenerated without the influence of divine truth upon his heart. On the contrary, these writings are full of examples in which the efficacy of this truth is asserted directly, as having been indispensably concerned in producing this change in man.

The same doctrine is also amply exhibited, as it respects

the Jewish church. Of the priests, the ordinary ministers of that church whose proper office it was to teach the Scriptures to the Israelites, God says, in the prophet Malachi, *The law of truth was in their mouth, and they turned many away from iniquity.* This declaration is a complete history of the fact in question, so far as the present subject is concerned, throughout all the preceding ages of the Jewish church.

What was true concerning the periods contained in the scriptural history, has been equally true, so far as we have any information of the periods which have since elapsed. Ministers have every where, and in every age of the Christian church, preached to sinners; and sinners under their preaching have been turned to God. In all these facts the duty of ministers at the present time, is distinctly seen and gloriously encouraged. He who would preach as the priests preached, as Christ preached, as the apostles preached, will proclaim the tidings of salvation to *sinners;* and will urge them unceasingly to faith, repentance, and holiness. Upon his preaching, if faithfully conducted in this manner, and accompanied by his own prayers, and those of the Christians around him, he may confidently look for the blessing of God.

# SERMON CXXXVI.

## ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.

### WHAT THEY ARE; AND WHAT IS THEIR INFLUENCE.

*For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*—1 COR. IV. 15.

IN the last discourse I attempted to prove, *that there are means of grace and salvation;* the first subject then proposed for discussion. I shall now endeavour,

II. *To shew what they are;* and

III. *To explain their influence.*

The means of grace may be distributed into a greater or less number of divisions, without any material disadvantage. At the present time, it will however be useful to mention only those which are of peculiar importance.

Of these the gospel, by which I here intend the Scriptures at large, is ever to be regarded as the sum; for it plainly involves them all. The gospel is especially to be considered as being efficacious to salvation when it is *preached;* this being that institution of God to which his peculiar blessing, *life for evermore,* is especially annexed in the gospel itself. Still it is ever to be remembered, that in every lawful, serious use of its instructions, precepts, warnings, threatenings, invitations, and promises, it is possessed of the same general nature and influence.

When we speak of the *means* of grace, in the plural, we always intend either *different modes of applying the gospel, or some or other of its precepts or ordinances to the human understanding or affections;* or *the performance of some act or series of acts, enjoined in the Scriptures.*

It will be proper farther to observe, that the phrase which

I have here used, is commonly employed to denote both the *means by which in the usual course of providence, grace is originally obtained;* and the *means of increasing it when once obtained.*

Under this head are included,

I. *The preaching of the gospel;*

II. *The reading of the Scriptures;*

III. *Prayer;*

IV. *Correspondence with religious men;*

V. *Religious meditation: particularly self-examination;* and,

VI. *The religious education of children.*

To these may be added, as efficacious to the same end, although differing in several respects from all those already mentioned, *the instructive and monitory, the merciful and afflictive, dispensations of Divine Providence to ourselves and others.* It ought to be remembered, that I consider none of these as means of grace in any other sense, than as *they display and impress upon the mind the truth of God.*

In the Scriptures all these things appear to sustain the character which I have attributed to them.

*The law of the Lord,* says David, *is perfect, converting the soul; The testimonies of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple. Search the Scriptures,* says our Saviour to the Jews, *for in them ye think ye have the words of eternal life. How shall they believe,* says St. Paul, *in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. God be merciful to me a sinner,* said the publican, *who went up to the temple to pray:* and our Saviour informs us, that *he went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee. He that walketh with wise men,* says Solomon, *shall be wise. Examine yourselves,* says St. Paul, *whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobate?* This exhortation is obviously given to persons supposed by the apostle to be individually of different moral characters; and is plainly given to them all, whatever their character might be. *Stand in awe,* said David to his enemies, *and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed; and be still. Keep thy heart,* said David to

Solomon, *with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Train up a child in the way he should go,* says Solomon, *and when he is old he will not depart from it:* and again, *The reproofs of instruction are the way of life. Fathers,* says St. Paul, *train up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

These and many other passages, of a nature generally similar, I consider as directing, either mediately or immediately, the conduct of sinners. Most of them are so obviously of this character, as apparently to admit of no dispute. A part of them may, I am aware, admit of objections to this construction. But, if these were to be given up, the rest would, I apprehend, be abundantly sufficient to answer the purpose for which they have been quoted. That they are directed to such objects, as I have termed means of grace, will not be questioned.

With the instruction furnished us concerning this subject by the word of God, we are bound to unite that also which is exhibited to us by his providence. If certain measures have been customarily crowned with success in the pursuit of salvation; and other measures, or the omission of these successful ones, have terminated without that success; then we are warranted to conclude, that the course which has been heretofore successful, will be again. We are warranted to conclude, that what God has usually blessed, he may confidently be expected to bless; and that the conduct which has been regularly followed by impenitence and unbelief, will produce hereafter no other consequences.

But, so far as man can judge, one general course of conduct has in fact been usually crowned with success in this mighty concern from the beginning. The preaching and hearing of the gospel, and the diligent anxious use of those which I have styled means of grace, have been actually followed by faith, repentance, and holiness, from the promulgation of the gospel to the present time. The same things may therefore be reasonably expected to produce the same consequences hereafter.

III. *I shall now endeavour to explain the influence of these means upon mankind.*

Before I begin this explanation I wish to remark, that although I should fail of giving a satisfactory account of this subject, the failure would in no degree, affect the truth of the doctrine. If the evidence alleged has been sufficient, and the conclusions have been fairly drawn; then the doctrine is true. Nor will my ignorance, or that of any other persons, concerning the manner in which the event referred to is accomplished, and the doctrine true, make any difference with respect to the principal point. We know perfectly the existence of many facts; while of the manner in which they are accomplished we are unable to form any adequate conception.

The influence of the means of grace upon mankind may, if I mistake not, be explained under the two general heads of

*Instruction;* and,

*Impression.*

These I shall now consider in the order already specified.

1. *The means of grace become such by instruction.*

It will be universally acknowledged, that men, according St. Paul's declaration, cannot *believe on him of whom they have not heard: nor call on him in whom they have not believed.* If God, the Father, or the Son, be unknown; it is plain, that he can neither be trusted, invoked, nor obeyed. There can be no known relation, in this case, between the creature and the Creator; and therefore, on the part of the creature, no known or possible duty to the Creator. *Where there is no law, there is no transgression;* and where there is no knowledge, either actual or possible, of a law, there is in the fullest sense no law. The knowledge of God therefore, his law, and our obligation to obey it, is indispensable even to our possible obedience or disobedience.

When mankind had fallen, and Christ had made an expiation for their sins; it was equally and absolutely necessary, in order to their acceptance of Christ, which then became their duty, that they should know this glorious person in such a sense, as to enable them to exercise faith in him as their Redeemer. Without such knowledge, it is naturally impossible for us to believe in him at all. The same things are equally true of every religious duty and subject. We cannot perform any duty, however well disposed, unless it

be known to us; nor be required to perform it, unless such knowledge be attainable.

Thus it is evident, that the gospel is indispensable to the very existence of Christianity in the mind of man: and as the gospel cannot be of any possible use to man unless known by him; so the knowledge of the gospel is indispensable to the existence of faith, repentance, and holiness.

It is indeed perfectly obvious, that God can, with infinite ease, reveal the fundamental truths, and all other truths, of the gospel to any man immediately, as he did to St. Paul. This however is not to be expected; as it is certainly no part of his ordinary providence. In the usual course of that providence, men are taught the gospel by *preaching*, *reading*, and other modes of instruction. These or some of these are therefore indispensable, in the usual course of things, to the existence of Christianity in the minds of men. Hence, in one respect, the gospel is said to be *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth:* and hence, in the same respect, it is said, that *when the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

In the same manner *religious education, meditation, correspondence with religious men, and the reading of religious books,* become thus far means of salvation to mankind. In all these ways the word of God is made known to mankind: and all of them have, and were designed by God to have, their peculiar advantages.

Among the things most necessary to be known by us in order to our salvation, our own hearts or moral characters, hold a primary place. I know of no manner in which he who feels himself to be whole can realize that he needs a physician. To the existence even of a wish for deliverance, the sense of danger or distress is absolutely necessary. If we are now conscious of being holy, or of being safe; we certainly can never desire renovation, forgiveness, or expiation; nor seek for a deliverer to save us. While such a consciousness continues, no reason can be perceived by the man who experiences it, why he should look for salvation from Christ any more, than why an angel who has never fallen, should look for salvation from the same source.

But sin, and the moral distress and danger occasioned by it, have their seat in the heart. If then the heart be unknown, these will also be unknown; and the mind will never seek nor wish for deliverance from them. Of course, it cannot and will not expect its salvation from the Redeemer.

The knowledge of the heart is extensively communicated by the Scriptures: so extensively, that without them mankind will never understand their true moral character in any such manner as to produce any evangelical benefit. But all the scriptural communications, of this nature, will be useless to us, unless we apply them to ourselves. This application can never be made to any purpose, unless we *commune with our own hearts*. *Self-examination* is the direct, and in many respects the only, mode in which we apply the scriptural accounts of our moral nature to ourselves. Without such examination we may indeed admit the scriptural accounts concerning human nature generally; and believe, that other men are sinners in the manner and degree there exhibited. But we shall never realize, that these accounts, in their whole extent, are applicable also to ourselves. Particularly, we shall form no just apprehensions of our odiousness in the sight of God, of the extent of our condemnation by his law, or our exposure to final perdition. The necessity of such examination is therefore absolute.

Farther, when we have in fact become convinced of our sin, and our danger, we are still equally unconvinced of our indisposition to return to God by evangelical repentance and faith. All mankind appear originally to believe their conversion to God to be so absolutely in their power, as that, whenever they shall make serious and earnest attempts to accomplish it, they shall accomplish it of course, and without any peculiar divine assistance. Whatever opinions they may imagine themselves to form concerning this subject, they still believe; and if they ever become penitents, will find themselves to have believed, that whenever they shall resolve upon the exercise of faith and repentance, as necessary to their moral character, and true well-being, they shall certainly repent and believe. In this way they feel, in a great measure, secure of salvation.

It is a secret, which probably no professed believer in the doctrines of free grace ever discovers before he has made attempts of this nature, that with all his apprehended orthodoxy, he still places his ultimate reliance on himself; and realizes no necessity for any peculiar assistance from God. Among the things which he feels to be thus absolutely in his power, *prayer*, that is, *evangelical and acceptable prayer*, is always one. Nothing in the ordinary course of things, not even his own speculative belief to the contrary, will ever persuade him, that he will find any difficulty in praying to God, until after he has seriously made the trial. *His own efforts to pray* will usually be the first, and the only means of changing this opinion, and of convincing him, that he has essentially mistaken his real character.

*Actual attempts at prayer*, at exercising faith and repentance, and at forming efficacious resolutions of obedience, furnish, in this case, a kind of instruction not easily supplied by any thing else. Conviction of the practicability or impracticability of any measures of the insufficiency of our own powers, and of the certain failure of our efforts, is wrought only by the trial of these measures, powers, and efforts. A loose, general, uninfluential belief, may be otherwise entertained. But a conviction, which will be felt, will be gained only in this manner. I know not whether, in all ordinary cases, this conviction is not indispensable to the attainment of holiness.

*In the conduct and character of religious men*, the actual existence of religion is often, perhaps usually, first seen and believed. In the same manner is the dignity, and beauty, and the excellence, of religion usually first discerned and acknowledged. The truth also, and especially the importance, of many primary doctrines of the gospel, and the chief part of what is commonly intended by experimental religion, are all principally learned and realized by means of their conversation.

These may serve as specimens, sufficient for the present purpose of the *instruction*, acquired in the use of the means of grace.

2. *Means of grace become such by the impressions which they make on the heart.*

To a person at all versed in human nature it is perfectly

evident, that in every case where men are to be moved to any serious exertion, mere conviction will often be inefficacious. The *intellect* is not the *motive* faculty of the mind. The *will*, in which term I include all the affections, gives birth to every effort which the mind makes concerning the objects of the present or the future world. But the mere conviction of the intellect is, of itself, rarely sufficient to move the will, or engage the affections. Something farther is, in a particular manner, necessary to engage man in the serious pursuit of spiritual and eternal objects, or to make him realize any serious interest in these objects. The mere proof, that a doctrine is true, is usually but one step towards persuading us to exertion of any kind. In addition to this, it is commonly necessary, for the same end, that our imagination be roused, and our affections awakened and engaged.

In accordance with these observations, mankind, in their customary language, regularly express the different states of the mind, when it is merely convinced, and when it feels the truth of which it is convinced. To *see* a truth, and to *feel* it, are familiar expressions in our language, which denote ideas widely different from each other. So different are they, that we commonly see, without feeling at all; and, therefore, without being moved to exertion by what we see. All men use, all men understand, this language; and thus prove, that there is a solid foundation in the nature of things for the distinction which it expresses.

In accordance with this scheme, eloquence, both in speaking and writing, has ever been directed to the imagination; and to the passions as well as to the intellect: and that kind of eloquence which has been employed in moving the heart, has been considered as possessing a higher and more influential nature, than that which is addressed merely to the understanding. Hence eloquence itself is commonly considered, rather as the power of persuasion than the power of conviction.

That we are capable of being moved to a sense of spiritual objects, altogether different from a cold, unimpassioned conviction, as truly as to such a sense of temporal objects, cannot admit of a rational doubt. Every minister of the gospel, every moralist, and every other man who labours to amend the human character; even those who deny

the doctrine for which I am contending; prove, that they adopt this opinion, by using, to the utmost of their power, the means of impression for this end, as well as those of conviction. In this conduct they shew, more evidently than is possible by any other method, that they realize this difference, and, to avail themselves of it, employ these means.

The Scriptures themselves are universally formed in this manner. They are every where filled with instruction; but they are also filled every where with persuasion. Instead of being a cold compilation of philosophical dogmas, they are filled with real life; with facts; with persons; with forcible appeals to the imagination; and with powerful applications to the heart. With these, the instruction is every where interwoven. By these it is continually embodied. In the Bible, no affection of the human heart is unaddressed. Our hope and fear, our love and hatred, our sorrow and joy, our desire and aversion, nay, our taste for beauty, novelty, and sublimity, for moral glory and greatness, are all alternately, and most forcibly, applied to, in order that the whole man, as a being possessed of imagination and affections as well as of understanding, may be alarmed, allured, and compelled, to return from sin, embrace holiness, and live for ever.

Now, the Scriptures were published to a world of sinners; and with the most merciful design of bringing them to repentance and salvation. To *them*, in a peculiar manner, is a great part of the Scriptures addressed. *They are profitable* in all their parts; and are contrived by infinite wisdom, so as best to compass the end for which they were written. They teach that we may see, they impress that we may feel, divine truth in the most profitable manner.

In the promotion of this end all the means of grace conspire. By an early and well-directed *religious education*, such truths as children can understand are conveyed to their minds with a force eminently impressive, and singularly lasting. The state of the mind itself is here peculiarly favourable to the design of making deep impressions; and has hence been particularly regarded by God in those precepts which enjoin such an education at this period. The efficacy of these impressions is strongly declared in that remarkable passage, already quoted from the book of Pr

verbs. *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

What is true of *religious education*, is also true of all the means of grace which I have specified. *Public worship* is plainly formed, with a particular design to affect the heart of man by those truths which are taught in the house of God. The day, the place, the occasion, are all in the highest degree solemn and interesting. The numbers united in the worship, necessarily communicate and receive the strong feelings of sympathy; and regard the subjects of instruction with emotions widely different from those which would be experienced in solitude. The nature of the ordinances is also in a singular degree solemn, awful, and affecting. In a word, every thing pertaining to the subject is in the happiest manner fitted to move the mind, and deeply to instamp on it the truths of the gospel.

*Prayer*, in the like manner, is eminently fitted to teach, and not only to teach, but to make us feel, the various doctrines of religion. Prayer, in every form, is a service peculiarly impressive. In the church, in the family, and in the closet, it is attended by pre-eminent advantages. When we retire to our *closets, and shut the door* on the world and all which it contains; and *pray to our Father who is in secret;* we are withdrawn from all external things; are fixed on our own concerns; our guilt, our danger, our helplessness, our dependance on God alone, for hope, sanctification, and deliverance; and our absolute necessity of being interested in Christ, as the only expiation for sin, and the only safety to man. We bring God before us, *face to face;* and *see eye to eye.* The awful and transcendent character of this great and glorious Being rises up to our view, in a manner resembling that in which the Israelites contemplated it at the foot, or Moses on the summit, of Mount Sinai. The nearness of the judgment is realized with singular force, and the approach of the final recompense anticipated with profound awe, and most salutary apprehension.

Among the things which in the attempts to perform this duty are deeply impressed on the soul of the sinner, *his own inability to pray in a manner acceptable to God*, is one of the most important and affecting. No sinner realizes this truth before he has made the attempt in earnest. Nor does

any thing appear to lay low the pride, and annihilate the self-righteousness, of the human heart in the same effectual manner. When he attempts to pray, and, in the very act of attempting it, finds clear and practical proof, that his prayers are *selfish, cold,* and *heartless;* he first begins to feel in a useful manner, his absolute dependance on God for every good disposition. Prayer is naturally the last hope, the last consolation, of man. So long as we can ask for mercy, we never feel entirely unsafe. But when the soul becomes satisfied, by actual trial, that its prayers are such as itself condemns; it becomes also satisfied, that its only ultimate dependance is on the mere mercy of God.

Prayer also, in the same effectual manner, opens to the view of the soul, with peculiar power, its whole moral state; its guilt, its exposure, and its ruin. All these things, when brought up to view in its converse with God, in making them the subjects of its own confessions and requests, and in revolving them with the most solemn and interesting meditation, all enhanced by a realizing sense of the presence of God, are felt by the soul with a peculiar energy, usually followed by happy effects.

Each of the other means of grace which I have specified has its own, and that a very desirable, power of affecting the heart. We are so formed, as to be capable of deep impressions in various ways, and from many different sources. Each way has its peculiar efficacy; and every source is copious in its influence on the mind.

The great objects concerning which these impressions are especially needed, and are actually made, are, the guilt and danger of sin; the glorious mercy of God in redeeming, sanctifying, and forgiving, sinners; the absolute dependance of the soul on him for all good, both natural and moral; and his willingness to communicate both through Jesus Christ. These united, and thoroughly understood, constitute those views, and awaken those emotions, which together are commonly styled *convictions of conscience;* or, to speak perhaps with more precision, that awakened state of the conscience, which usually precedes regeneration; and which, in the ordinary course of God's providence, seems indispensable to its existence. Converse with as many religious men as you please concerning this subject; and

every one of them will declare, that he has passed through a state of mind substantially of this nature; and will inform you, that it anteceded every hope of reconciliation to God, and every exercise which he has believed to be genuine religion in itself. Such then may be deemed one of the laws of the moral or spiritual kingdom: a law which appears to be formed with supreme wisdom, and with supreme benevolence to the sinner. If he were never to entertain such a sense of sin; if he were never to have such apprehensions of his danger; if he were never thus to feel his dependance on his Maker; he could not, I think, form any just views of the nature or greatness of his deliverance, nor of the goodness of God in rescuing him from destruction, sanctifying his soul, and blotting out his transgressions; nor of the importance or excellence of that holiness with which he is endued; nor of the nature and glory of that happiness to which he will gain a final admission. In a word, it seems indispensable that such a state of mind should precede his regeneration, in order to enable him, throughout all his future being, to understand what God has done for him, and to feel the gratitude actually felt by the minds, and joyfully expressed in the praises, of the first-born.

Some persons, when considering this subject, appear to feel as if regeneration could not be absolutely attributed to the Spirit of truth, unless it was accomplished altogether without the employment of means. But this opinion is plainly erroneous. The very means themselves are furnished entirely by this divine agent. When furnished, all of them united would prove wholly insufficient without his creative influence. No man in his sober senses ever mistrusted that ploughing and sowing, rain and sunshine, would produce wheat. The almighty power of God, after all these things have operated to the utmost, is absolutely necessary even to the germination of the seed, and still more obviously to the perfection of the plant. In the same manner, whatever means may be employed in bringing man from sin to holiness, and whatever may be their influence, the creative power of the divine Spirit is absolutely necessary to accomplish his renovation. All that can be truly said in this

case is, that this glorious person operates in one manner, and not in another.

The human soul is not regenerated in the same manner with that in which the dust of the ground was originally made into a human body. In this case, a mere act of divine power, unconnected with every thing else, accomplished the effect. But, before renewing man, God is pleased, in the usual course of his spiritual providence, to instruct him, to alarm, to invite, to promise, and to persuade. To prove the usefulness of these means, nothing more seems necessary than to observe, that they always precede or attend our renovation; that is, always in the usual course of providence. It is the soul which is thus taught, alarmed, and allured, upon which descends the efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit; and not the soul, uninstructed, unawakened, thoughtless of its guilt, and devoted only to the pursuit of sensual objects. *The whole history of experimental religion*, both within and without the Scriptures, is, unless I am deceived, a complete confirmation of this truth.

But to the existence of this state of the soul, the means of grace, as I have described them, and their influence, appear to be indispensable. By the instructions which they communicate on the one hand, and the impressions which they make on the other, concerning spiritual objects, they appear, whenever employed with seriousness, fervour, and perseverance, to bring the soul into this interesting and profitable situation. It is, I conceive, with reference to this fact, that God says, *Is not my word as the fire, and as the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?* With reference to this fact, Christ says, that *his words are spirit and life;* and that *they will make men free from the bondage of corruption.* With the same reference, Paul declares the gospel to be *the power of God unto salvation;* and the word of God to be *quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.* From this power of the gospel was derived the fact, that the Jews, who crucified Christ, were in such numbers *pricked in the heart* by the preaching of St. Peter, and cried out, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

All the efficacy which I have attributed to the means of grace does not, I acknowledge, amount to regeneration, nor

ensure it. But it amounts to what St. Paul terms *planting and watering. The increase* must be, and still is, given by by God only. In the same manner God must create the grain: or the husbandman, after all his ploughing and sowing, after all the rain and sunshine, will never find a crop. Still, these are indispensable means of his crop; so indispensable, that without them the crop would never exist. As truly, in the ordinary course of providence, there will, without the use of the means of grace, be no spiritual harvest. There will be no instructions given; no impressions made; and no realizing convictions of guilt, danger, and dependance, produced, and without these, there will be no regeneration of the soul, and no title obtained to eternal life.

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# SERMON CXXXVII.

## THE ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.

### OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

*For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, ye have not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the gospel.*—1 COR. IV. 15.

IN the first discourse from these words I proposed,

I. *To shew that there are means of grace;*

II. *To shew what they are;*

III. *To explain their influence;* and,

IV. *To answer the principal objections to this scheme of doctrine.*

The three first of these subjects have been already discussed. I shall now,

IV. *Answer the principal objections to this scheme of doctrine.*

These, as they are customarily alleged, may be consi-

dered as chiefly made to two practical inferences, which I shall derive from the two preceding discourses.

1. *It follows, from the observations made in these discourses, that the means of grace ought to be used by sinners; and by Christians for the purpose of promoting the salvation of sinners.*

If there *are* means of grace and salvation given by God; then they were given for the very purpose of promoting the salvation of sinners. As this was the end which God proposed in communicating them to mankind; it is an end, in which all men are bound to rejoice, and which they are plainly obligated to pursue. But unless these means are used by sinners for their own salvation, they will ordinarily be of no benefit to them: and unless Christians use them also for the purpose of promoting the salvation of sinners, they will fail of their intended effect. Christian ministers must preach the gospel to sinners. Christian parents must educate their sinful children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* Christians must live, and act, and converse, with sinners. Otherwise the salvation of sinners will usually be neglected, and therefore will be unattained.

Farther; if there *are* means of grace, then the appointment of them is wise; the communication of them to mankind is benevolent; and the use of them by those for whom they were appointed proper. It can hardly be supposed, that God has provided and published means of salvation to mankind, and yet by his own authority made it improper that they should be used. According to this scheme, sinners, although expressly commanded to *flee from the wrath to come,* to *seek the Lord while he may be found,* and to *turn from the error of their way,* are yet by divine authority precluded from the very measures which alone will, in the usual course of things, produce the effect enjoined.

That Christians are bound to employ the means of grace for the salvation of sinners will not, I suppose, be doubted. That sinners must employ them also in various respects, is evinced by this very position; as well as by the observations made in the preceding discourses.

If the gospel is to be preached to sinners, *they* must hear. If Christian parents are to *train up* their *children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,* they must listen to their

instructions. If sinners are to become acquainted with the word of God, or even to know whether that which is preached to them, is the word of God, or not; they must read the Scriptures. If sinners are to be informed of the reality, power, and excellency, of religion, they must converse with religious men. If they are to understand and feel their guilt; they must *commune with* their *own hearts*. If they are ever to know the real nature of their character and efforts, they must pray. From their own use of the means of grace, almost all their deep impressions of their guilt, danger, dependance on Christ, and absolute need of the regenerating influence of the Spirit of God, must be derived. In a word, if they are to obtain salvation, as most, or all other Christians have obtained it; indeed, if they are to obtain it at all in the ordinary course of providence, they must obtain it in the use of the means of grace. This is the way which God has ever blessed, and will undoubtedly bless hereafter. Nor are we warranted to hope for his blessing in any other manner.

To the proofs of this point, alleged in this and the preceding discourses, I shall add but one at the present time. God, in the dispensation which he revealed to Moses, required all the Israelites to use continually all the means of grace furnished to them in the then-existing scriptural canon. The parent, however sinful he might be, who did not circumcise his man-child upon the eighth day, was, by the express law of God, punished with the excision of that child. Every male was expressly required to present himself three times a year before the Lord; that is, at the tabernacle, or in the temple. All were required to keep the appointed feasts, particularly to celebrate the passover. They were required, without distinction, to offer the various appointed sacrifices; to educate their children religiously; and to seek the law at the mouths of the priests, its ordinary ministers. It is remarkable, that for the omission of these duties they were in several instances to be punished with excision; particularly such as did not *afflict themselves* on the great day of atonement: Lev. xxiii. 29: such as, being ceremonially clean, forbore to keep the passover: such as killed an ox, lamb, or goat, and did not bring it to the door of the tabernacle, to offer an offering unto the Lord. Lev. xvii. 4.

Thus the Israelites, and in some of the cases the strangers who resided with them, were not only required, but required under this terrible sanction, punctiliously to use the means of grace, both ordinary and extraordinary.

It is farther to be observed, that *the Israelites are now here, either in the Old or New Testament, censured for the fact, that they attended on these various means of grace.* They are often censured for their impenitence and unbelief indeed; and the more severely for being impenitent and unbelieving in the midst of these solemn services, because the abuse of such privileges obviously enhanced their guilt. But not a hint is given us, either by Christ, the prophets, or the apostles, that they were censurable, merely for being present when these means were employed by others, or for being active in employing them themselves for their own good. The gospel therefore regards this subject exactly as it was regarded by the law; and has introduced no change in this respect into the divine dispensations.

2. *It follows, from the same discourses, that ministers ought to advise and exhort sinners to use the means of grace.*

If God has appointed these means, and is daily blessing them; if he has usually, and not improbably always, wherever the gospel has been published, conveyed his spiritual blessing to men in this way; then it cannot be reasonably doubted, that ministers ought to advise sinners to labour in this way to gain eternal life. As to sinners in general, this is the only way in which eternal life will be gained. Refusing them his advice, therefore, is no other than refusing them any advice concerning their salvation.

To this scheme it is however objected,

1. *That regeneration, being immediately and solely the work of the Spirit of God, is not at all accomplished by means; and that therefore sinners, however strenuously they may use the means of grace, do in truth nothing towards this change of character.*

That the act of regenerating man is an act of the divine Spirit alone, I readily admit and fully believe; but I deny the consequence drawn from this doctrine. If I am not deceived I have, in both the preceding discourses, particularly in the first, proved it to be an error. The text itself

if I mistake not, is a decisive proof that it is an error. The text asserts, to say the least, that St. Paul, by his preaching, *contributed* to the regeneration of the Corinthian Christians. In an humbler sense, *he begat* these Christians as truly as God did in a higher sense. But if Paul contributed to the regeneration of these men by his preaching, the men themselves as certainly contributed to their own regeneration, by being present at his discourses, by hearing them, by understanding them, and by feeling with strong impressions the truths which he uttered. Had not all this been done by *them*, St. Paul might, with exactly the same success, have preached to the dead.

In the doctrine for which I contend, there is, I apprehend, nothing embarrassing, and nothing which is even peculiar. God, as was observed in the first of these discourses, is equally the sole agent in the production of a crop. But it would be a palpable absurdity to conclude from this fact, that the crop would come into existence without the labours of the farmer. Were he not to plough and sow the ground, a child knows that not a stalk of wheat would be produced. St. Paul contributed as really to the *spiritual* harvest, as the farmer to the *natural* one; and in the same sense; for without his labours, that harvest would not have existed. Neither Paul nor the husbandman is at all concerned in the *creative act* of God, employed in each of these causes. But both of them do that without which this creative act would not exist. Accordingly, where the gospel is not preached, regeneration does not take place; as crops have no existence where the earth is not cultivated.

2. *It is objected, that the use of the means of grace, on the part of sinners, is itself sinful; and that ministers, therefore, cannot conscientiously advise sinners to use these means; since this would be no other than advising them to commit sin.*

All this, in all probability, is the objection on which the greatest stress is laid, and that which has contributed most to perplex those to whom, and not improbably those also by whom, it is urged; I shall consider myself as justified in examining it at some length. It is presented in various lights: I will endeavour to follow the course pursued by the objectors themselves.

It is triumphantly alleged, that the Scriptures have de-

cided the point in debate, and established the objection immoveably, by such declarations as the following. *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.* Prov. xv. 8. *The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind.** Prov. xxi. 27. *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.* Prov. xxviii. 9. If then the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, if the prayer of the wicked is an abomination, it cannot be lawful for the wicked to pray, nor for a minister to advise him to pray.

I have, I believe, alleged the objection in its full force, and in the very terms in which it is usually alleged. This at least has been my design.

It is not pretended that sinners are in the Scriptures *expressly* forbidden to pray; nor that ministers are expressly forbidden to advise them to pray. The objection is *inferred* from other declarations of the Scriptures. Like other inferences, it is however to be suspected, until it shall be shewn to be certainly and necessarily derived from such declarations. The authority of a *certain* conclusion, fairly derived from the Scriptures, I admit. But in order to this admission, I must be satisfied that it is certain, and fairly derived from the Scriptures. Let us now examine this inference.

1. *The objection is founded on this general doctrine, that whenever an individual will commit sin in any conduct, he cannot lawfully adopt, nor be lawfully advised to adopt, that conduct.*

But from this doctrine it will follow, that sinners cannot lawfully do any thing while in a state of sin, nor be lawfully advised to do any thing. There is as much certainty, that a sinner will sin in all other conduct which he adopts while he is a sinner, as in praying. *The ploughing of the wicked is* expressly declared to be *sin.* Prov. xxi. 4. *The way of the wicked,* that is, his universal course of life, *is* declared to be *an abomination to the Lord.* Prov. xv. 9. *The thoughts of the wicked are* declared to be *an abomination to the*

* Especially when he offereth it to serve some bad end.

*Lord*. Prov. xv. 26. Of course the wicked cannot lawfully plough, think, nor live, in the ordinary course of life, that is converse, labour, buy, sell, and provide for their families; nor be lawfully advised to do these or any of these things.

It will be remembered, that all these declarations, and all those quoted in a preceding paragraph, were written by an Israelite under the Mosaic dispensation; and written for men living also under the same dispensation. Yet in that very dispensation, God required Moses to command all sinners of that nation to labour; to cultivate their own ground; to circumcise their children; to celebrate the passover; to offer sacrifices; to be present at the public worship of God; to hear and learn his word from the mouth of their priests; and to teach all these things to their children. It will not, I presume, be questioned, that Moses, in enjoining these things upon the sinful Israelites, as well as upon the virtuous ones, acted lawfully; or in other words, was guilty of no sin. But what was lawful for Moses in this case, is in itself lawful. Accordingly, it was lawfully done by all the ministers who followed him in the Jewish church. It cannot therefore fail to be lawful to Christian ministers, unless it has been plainly forbidden.

It will here be said, that Moses, in requiring this conduct of the sinful Israelites, neither commanded nor authorized them to continue sinners in performing it. This is unquestionably true. So far from allowing them to continue in sin, he required them to perform these various duties from supreme love to God. Equally true is this of the Christian minister, in directing sinners to use the means of grace, or to perform any of the other duties of life. Instead of directing or allowing them to remain impenitent, he directs them to perform every duty with a virtuous disposition.

From this doctrine it will also follow, that it is unlawful to advise Christians themselves to use the means of grace, or indeed to adopt any course of conduct whatever. Both the Scriptures and observation teach us, that Christians continually sin; that they sin in their repentance, in their faith, in reading the Bible, in prayer, in the observance of the sabbath, in their attendance on public worship, in the education of their children, and in the ordinary business of life. What-

ever conduct they adopt, we know that they will sin in performing it. On this principle, therefore, they cannot lawfully adopt, nor be lawfully advised to adopt, that conduct. Of course, as our Lord, when he directed the apostles to go and preach the gospel to every creature, knew that they would commit sin in obeying it; the direction itself, according to the scheme which I oppose, was unlawful.

It will here probably be asked, *What then shall be done? Shall we advise men to commit sin?* To this question I answer, that according to the spirit of the objection, you must either advise them to nothing, not even to repent and believe; or you must advise them to commit sin: for, according to the objection, advising them to any thing, even to repent and believe, is advising them to commit sin.

But I apprehend that this account of the subject is as unfounded, as the scheme enforced by it is impracticable. God, as it appears to me, deals with mankind; and, if he deals with them at all, according to the system of providence which he has established, must deal with them as rational beings. As they are all originally sinners; every thing addressed to them, either by God or man, must be addressed to sinners. He has commanded and exhorted sinners in his own person; and has required men also to teach and exhort them in his name. In these commands and exhortations two things are included: *the act to be done,* and *the disposition with which it is to be done.* The command or counsel sometimes includes both expressly; and sometimes but one. Such commands and counsels as direct to the performance of *the act,* direct to *that act which, in the case stated, is proper to be done;* and *imply the disposition with which it should be done.* Such as direct *the disposition,* require *that, and that only, which is virtuous.* Those which require the act, regulate both the heart and the external conduct. Those which require the disposition, regulate merely the affections of the heart.

Commands of both these kinds God has evidently given to men as rational beings merely; and often without discriminating at all their moral character. They are given to all men. The duties which these commands enjoin are numberless. They occur every day, and are as obligatory on the sinner as on the Christian. They bind with their whole

force every man by whom they are known. Among these are prayer, attending public worship, reading the Scriptures, and industry in our lawful business. God requires every man to perform these various duties of life as they occur. He does not leave him at liberty to defer the performance, until he has discovered whether he is the subject of evangelical repentance. He requires the performance at the time; and if the individual refuse, God will not hold him guiltless. But it will be asked, *Is not every action to be performed from supreme love to God?* An answer to this question has already been given. This disposition is implied in every action which God requires us to perform; and God will accept of no performance which does not flow from this source. To such a performance only is an impenitent sinner directed when he is directed to pray, to read the Scriptures, to worship God in the sanctuary, or to use any of the means of grace.

It will be farther asked, *Whether the man, who performs the act merely, can be said to obey the command of God? What is here actually done* is easily understood; so easily as to admit of neither debate nor doubt. The person in question performs the act which God requires. But if he does not perform it cordially, he is not obedient in the cordial or virtuous sense.

I shall perhaps be asked still farther, *Whether the man, who performs the act merely, is any better for performing it than if he had neglected or refused to perform it?* I answer, that supposing the man's disposition substantially the same in both cases, he is less sinful when he performs the act, than when he neglects or refuses to perform it. This I say with confidence, because God has said it repeatedly, and in the most unambiguous manner. Of several kings of Judah, who were plainly sinners, particularly of Joash and Amaziah, it is directly said, that they did that which was *right in the sight of the Lord.* Of Joash it is said, that *he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest.* Of Amaziah it is said, that *he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart:* that is, not with a good or virtuous heart. In other words, these princes performed those external actions which God had required. The same thing in substance

is declared concerning several other kings of Judah. But who can doubt, that to do *that which is right in the sight of the Lord*, whatever it may be, which is thus right is less sinful, than to do that which is wrong in the sight of the Lord? Who can doubt that these declarations are intentionally commendatory; and that they exhibit these princes as thus far less sinful than those of whom it is said, that *they did evil in the sight of the Lord?*

The same sentence of God concerning the same subject is given us in another form, in the cases of Ahab and Jehu. Of Ahab it is said, that when he heard the words of Elijah announcing to him the destruction of his family, *he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.* It is immediately subjoined, *And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days. In his son's days I will bring the evil upon his house.* Jehu was commissioned to destroy the family of Ahab. This commission he punctually executed. When he had finished this work, God said to him, *Because thou hast done well in executing that which was right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart; thy children, of the fourth generation, shall sit on the throne of Israel.* Immediately it is subjoined, *But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart; for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin.* Here we see both these princes rewarded, and expressly declared by God himself to be rewarded, for external actions merely. For both, in a manner equally express, are pronounced still to be gross sinners. But that which is declared by God to be rewarded by himself, is not so sinful conduct, as that which is either not thus rewarded or is punished. Of Jehu God says farther, *Thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes.* He who has done well in executing that which is *right* in the eyes of his Maker, has not done so ill as he who has perpetrated that which is *wrong* in his eyes.

What is thus taught in the Scriptures, may be advantageously illustrated by the common experience of ourselves. The person who does those actions which God

requires, dishonours his Maker by his life far less, and contributes to the well-being of mankind far more, than he who does them not, or who does the contrary actions. To the eye of mankind the actions themselves are often exactly the same; and have exactly the same influence when performed by an unrenewed, as when performed by a renewed, man. The actions of an unrenewed man, therefore, may have a very beneficent influence on the interests of mankind, when performed agreeably to those commands of God, which regulate the external conduct of men. According to the scheme here exhibited, the Israelites, as has been observed, were required to be present at the various religious services enjoined by the Mosaic law. Yet God perfectly knew, and all the succeeding prophets and teachers also knew, that the greater part by far of those to whom these requisitions were addressed, were sinners. Still they not only required them to repent and believe, but advised, exhorted, and commanded them also, to do all these things. Nor would it have been any vindication to them for omitting the action, that their disposition was not sanctified; nor of the prophet or the priest for not exhorting them to the action, that they could not conscientiously advise sinners to any thing beside faith and repentance.

The same scheme is pursued throughout the New Testament. Christ, adopting the very language of the law, directed the *ten lepers* to go and shew themselves to the priests, in order to their cleansing. Luke xvii. 12. Nine of these lepers appear to have been sinners. This Christ knew as well before as after. Yet he did not think this a difficulty in his way towards giving them this direction.

He directed a collection of Jews, of whom he testifies that they did not believe, to search the Scriptures for the purpose of discovering his true character; and this plainly in order to their faith. John v. 39. 44.

He directed *the young ruler*, who plainly was not a believer, *to go and sell all that he had, and give to the poor, and come and follow him.*

He directed *the Herodians* to *render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.* They were sinners. But paying tribute was neither repenting nor believing.

He directed the scribe, in the parable of the good Samari-

tan, *to go and shew kindness to his enemies.* Yet this scribe appears to have been an unbeliever.

He directed Paul also, after he had fallen to the earth, and inquired what he would have him to do, to *arise* and go into *Damascus, where it should be told him what he would have him to do.*

Peter also directed Simon Magus to *repent, and pray that the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven.* It has been thought that Peter directed him to repent first, and then to pray for forgiveness. This certainly is an unnatural construction of the passage. The obvious meaning is, that St. Peter directed both of these things to be done immediately; and without indicating any intention that Simon should wait until after he repented, before he began to pray. Many more examples of a similar nature might be added.

It will not be supposed that in any one of these directions, the objects of them were commanded or advised to commit sin. As rational beings, they were directed to do such things as, *in the character of actions,* were proper to be done in their circumstances: while a general indication of their duty, as to the *disposition* with which they were to be done, is unquestionably implied in all these passages.

These passages however shew, that in his preaching and advice, a minister is not to confine himself to the mere enjoining of faith and repentance; but is to extend them to any other conduct in itself proper to be pursued: while he universally teaches these great Christian duties, as the immediate end of all his preaching.

Antecedently to every effort which the sinner makes, he is wholly ignorant whether God will not enable him to obey with the heart. It is also his indispensable duty thus to obey. Whenever advice or exhortation is given to sinners by any minister, he is equally ignorant whether they will or will not obey with the heart, as well as with the outward conduct. He knows also that it is their duty to obey in this manner. The effort therefore ought to be made, and the advice given.

In this manner I understand all those general commands and exhortations which respect the affairs of sinners. Our Saviour, preaching obviously to a collection of sinners, says, Luke xiii. 24, *Strive to enter in at the strait gate*

and again, Matt. vii. 14, *Enter ye in at the strait gate: because strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it.* The gate is at the head of the way leading to the house into which those who enter at the gate are finally to be admitted. Christ never speaks of heaven as *a city*, but several times as *a house*. Those who have not entered are obviously sinners: and to sinners he was obviously preaching in this kindred passage of St. Luke. Of the same nature is the memorable passage in Isaiah lv. 6, 7, *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found: call ye upon him while he is near.* The persons here addressed, are in the second verse mentioned as those who *spend money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not.* Such persons are obviously sinners. Still they are directed to seek and call upon the Lord.

If then it is still objected, *that directing sinners to such acts is directing them to commit sin:* the answer is short, God gave these very directions to the Israelites by Moses. Christ also gave the same directions to the Jews. It will not be supposed that he directed them to commit sin.

It may be farther said, that sinners *will commit sin in their prayers.* If they continue sinners, they undoubtedly will. So will Christians. If this be a reason why sinners should not be advised to pray; it is also a reason, why Christians should not be advised to pray.

But it will be replied, that *the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: while the prayer of the upright is his delight.* That the prayer of the wicked is in some respects an abomination; of hypocrites universally; of other sinners generally; is not to be questioned. There is plainly nothing holy in the conduct of impenitent men. But it will not follow, that the prayer of every impenitent man is in such a sense abominable to God as to ensure rejection from him. Christ did not tell the young ruler, that his inquiry concerning eternal life was abominable; nor refuse to hear and answer him. On the contrary the Scriptures inform us, that *Jesus beholding him, loved him.* This love was plainly distinct from the general benevolence of Christ to sinners: for with this benevolence he loves all sinners. The young ruler he loved peculiarly; and in a manner in which he did not love the Pharisees and the Jews generally. Other-

wise the fact would not have been specified. He did not, I acknowledge, love him with complacency; for he was not a Christian. But he loved him peculiarly, with what is called natural affection. In the character of this youth there was a peculiar natural amiableness; such as all men see, love, and acknowledge; and acknowledge often against their own doctrines. The foundation of this love is a train of attribute belonging to man, not as a sinner nor as a saint, but as an intelligent being. Of this number are native sweetness of temper; frankness; sincerity; simplicity, strongly seen in little children; gentleness; kindness; generosity; and compassion. All these are in themselves amiable in a certain degree; and in this degree they were loved by Christ.

Hence I argue, that, as all Christ's affections were exactly accordant with truth and propriety, so this exercise of affection to the young man was of the same nature, and was perfectly approved by God. Of course, there is at times something in sinners which in itself is not abominable to God; although their moral or sinful character is altogether abominable.

It is not wrong in itself, that sinners should desire food, or raiment, or happiness, or safety from evil. It is impossible that *percipient beings* should exist without desiring *the two last of these objects:* and equally impossible, that *men* should not desire *the two first.* The best men and the worst desire them alike: and no man is for this conduct ever reproved in the Scriptures. To ask of God for happiness and final safety, is not necessarily insincere nor guilty even in sinners. When sinners ask for mere mercy, or mere happiness, or mere safety, they may desire either as truly as saints; although their desires are not virtuous. So far as their desires are merely natural, inseparable from their nature, and sincere, they are not morally wrong; nor are they exhibited in the Scriptures as objects of the divine anger.

Accordingly, the prayer of the publican, who was, I think, plainly a sinner, was not regarded with mere anger by God; and was exactly such a prayer as I have mentioned: a prayer for mere mercy and safety. *He went down to his house justified rather than the pharisee,* because he had in some important respects a just sense of his charac-

ter, and a sincere desire to be delivered from the dangers of it: while the pharisee had neither.

It is in the nature of things proper that God, who saves no man for his merit, but communicates salvation merely from compassion, should save those who are sensible of their guilt, danger, and distress, rather than those who are utterly insensible, stupid, and careless. The former in the natural sense are qualified, and the latter are unqualified, to understand his mercy, the greatness of the love of Christ, and the wonderful work of sanctification; and to feel the evils from which they are delivered, and the blessings to which they are introduced, beyond the grave. Accordingly, sanctification, as I have heretofore particularly observed, is communicated by God to sinners, only when they are convinced of their guilt and danger, and laboriously employed in asking for forgiveness; and not to those who neither feel, nor strive, nor pray.. If the prayers of convinced sinners were abominable in the sense of the objector, could this fact exist? Is not the steady course of Providence a complete refutation of the scheme?

Finally. It will be asked, *Do not sinners grow worse under convictions of conscience and in the use of means?*

To this question I answer, that I do not know. Neither do my objectors. I do not believe the publican was justified rather than the pharisee because he grew worse under his conviction. Individuals may grow worse; and in one respect all certainly do. For they continue to sin so long as they are sinners; and that whether they are convinced or unconvinced.

Whether their characters and conduct are more guilty in any given instance, and during the periods immediately preceding, I am ignorant; and shall remain so, until I can search the heart and measure the degrees of depravity. As this is beyond the power of man, the whole inquiry is idle and vain.

Whenever sinners commit the same sins against greater light, they are more guilty than when they are committed against less light. But no man can determine whether this, or any thing like this, is the case with a sinner under conviction in a given instance; unless, perhaps sometimes, the convinced person himself. I see no good reason why

this question should ever be introduced into theological discourses. The only tendency of such introduction is to perplex and distress.

I have now, unless I am deceived, considered this objection in all its parts; and in all the forms in which it is customarily alleged. I shall now examine how far the objectors are consistent with themselves in their other conduct towards sinners.

Many of these objectors have children; and educate them religiously, as well as prudently. These children in many instances they know to be sinners, so far as this character can be known in any case. Now all these parents advise, and exhort, and command, their children to obey them; that is, in their external conduct; to attend their family prayers; to be present at public worship; to learn and repeat prayers to God; and to be earnestly and solemnly attentive to these religious duties. They teach them in the same manner to speak truth, to do justice, and to shew kindness, to all with whom they are concerned. They require them also to labour; to preserve their property; to go regularly to school; to perform errands; and to do many other services. In a word, by the whole weight of their own authority and that of the Scriptures, they require them to do every useful and desirable act, and to imbibe every useful and desirable habit.

Now it is to be remembered, that these children are sinners; and are known to be sinners. Of course, whatever conduct they adopt they will commit sin. Of course also, whatever conduct they are advised to adopt, they will, according to the general principle on which the objection is founded, be advised to commit sin. He will as probably, or as certainly, commit sin in executing the commands of their parents, attending public or family worship, going to school, or performing an errand, as other sinners do in praying or performing any other act, not in itself sinful.

How then can these parents, particularly such of them as are skilled in this controversy, advise their sinful children to pursue these kinds of conduct? Nay, more; how can they exhort and command them; reward them for obeying; and punish them for disobeying? The bare advice or ex

hortation given to other sinners, and prompting them to pray and strive that they may be saved, is, in the view of these parents, unlawful; and they refuse to give it. But to their own sinful children they not only give advice of the same unlawful nature; but add to it their exhortations and commands, their rewards and punishments.

Suppose the child of such a parent should refuse to obey such a command, or any other, because he was, and because his parent knew he was, a sinner, and could not therefore lawfully do the thing commanded, nor his parent lawfully command him to do it: what could the parent answer consistently, I mean with his own principles? Plainly, he could not reprove the child for his refusal; nor afterward advise, exhort, nor command him to do any thing, until after the child should have hopefully become a Christian.

But in this case what would become of children, and ultimately of the world? If children were not advised; what useful thing could they know? If they were not exhorted and commanded; what useful thing would they do; what useful habit would they establish, or even imbibe? Without such habits, what valuable end of their being could they answer? They would evidently become mere beasts of prey; and make the world a den of violence and slaughter.

In the same manner, and on the same principles, no person intrusted with the government or instruction of mankind, can advise, exhort, or command them, while sinners, to do any thing except to repent and believe. Civil rulers and instructors are daily called upon by their offices to advise, or otherwise direct, such as are plainly sinners. Every law and regulation of a state, or seminary of science, is possessed of this nature, and is a greater transgression on the part of the lawgiver or ruler, than advice can be; because it contains a stronger expression of his will, and a more powerful inducement to the conduct which is prescribed. When parents therefore, or others, advise; they are, according to the objection, guilty. When they exhort or command; they are more guilty. When they reward or punish; they are most guilty.

As civil rulers and instructors are obliged, equally with ministers, to do what is right, and avoid what is wrong;

they can no more be justified than ministers in advising, exhorting, or commanding, sinners to do any thing which is unlawful. Hence, unless their subjects or pupils should first repent and believe, they cannot require them to do any thing antecedently to their repentance. The world, of course, must be uninstructed and ungoverned until the Millennium: and what is still more to be lamented, the Millennium itself, according to the usual course of God's providence, will never arrive.

Among the regulations which exist in all literary institutions, one ever esteemed of high importance is the establishment of *public prayers*. At these, students universally have hitherto been required to be present. But on the scheme which I oppose, this requisition is altogether unlawful. In every such institution, there is conclusive reason to believe, that the great body of the members are impenitent. None of these therefore can, according to this scheme, be lawfully required to attend this worship, nor the public worship of the sabbath. But what would become of a literary institution, if this attendance were not required? What would these very parents say, if it were to be dispensed with in the case of their own children?

A Christian is the master of a family; but, as is sometimes the fact, is obviously the only Christian in the family. According to this scheme, it is plain, he cannot set up family worship; because he can neither require nor advise the members of his household to be present at this religious service.

Ministers, usually at least, preach more or less to sinners; and customarily endeavour to suit their sermons to the circumstances of impenitent men. But they can never lawfully advise sinners to be present, that they may hear them preach. Nor can a parent be justified in directing his children to be present; or to stand up to worship; or to listen, that he may learn and perform his duty: for in all these things they are still sinners, and will commit sin. Nor can a minister advise his sinful parishioners to support him; or to build or repair a church; or to do the external acts of charity, justice, or truth; or to arm in defence of his country; or to obey its laws and magistrates. In all these things, when done antecedently to re

generation, they are as really sinful, as in praying and in striving for salvation.

The very persons who rely most upon this objection, rejoice universally when mankind are in any place awakened to solemn consideration concerning their guilt and danger. But every awakened sinner prays; and no person can by any ordinary means prevent him from praying. Why do these men rejoice? Certainly not in the sin which the persons awakened are supposed to commit. Certainly not in the abominable character which these prayers have in the sight of God. In what then do they rejoice? Undoubtedly in the prospect of the sinner's sanctification and return to God. Of course, there is such a prospect. In this angels would also rejoice.

3. *It is objected, that advising sinners to pray will encourage them to sloth, and quiet them in sin.*

That this consequence may follow, I shall not deny. But it will follow only from an abuse of the doctrine which is here taught. A bad man may pervert a good doctrine to bad purposes; but this is no objection against the doctrine itself. These very consequences have, I verily believe, flowed from the doctrine of my objectors in ten instances, where in one they have flowed from that which I am supporting.

It is the duty of all men immediately to repent of their sins, and turn to God with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These things I would always preach; and wish my hearers always to believe and feel. For this end I would exhort them to be present, that they might hear and feel them. For the same end I would exhort parents, to teach them to their children in the morning of life, that they may know and feel them from the beginning. Nor am I less desirous that they should read the Scriptures, that they may find and feel the same things in *them*, as uttered by the mouth of God; that my own errors may in their minds be corrected, and the truths which I preach enforced by that holy book. For the same reasons I wish them to mark the lives, and enjoy the conversation of Christians; that they may be enlightened by their views, and deeply affected by the excellency of religion manifested in their conduct. The religious writings of others I recommend, for the same im-

portant purposes. I preach and write with the hope of doing some real good to mankind. That others, with the same design, possess more ability to accomplish this interesting purpose, I cannot entertain a doubt. The same reasons therefore, which make we wish that the congregation allotted to me may be present to hear my discourses, must, with enhanced force, render me desirous that they should also read the writings of others.

Finally; Whatever is thus taught, enforced, and gained, I urge them to make by solemn meditation a part of their own habitual course of thought; compare with their own moral condition; and bring home to their hearts, by asking God to sanctify them, and to bless the means of knowledge and amendment which he has been pleased to put into their hands.

In all this I see no natural cause of *sloth* or *quiet in sin*. On the contrary, there is here, if I mistake not, more done to awaken, engage, and encourage, men to seek salvation, than on the scheme of the objector. When I remember, that divines of the first reputation and the greatest success have thus preached; and that in the use of these very means the great body of mankind, who appear to have been or to be now Christians, have become Christians; I feel assured, that this is the proper manner of persuading others to assume the same character, and placing them in the way to a blessing from God.

## SERMON CXXXVIII.

### THE ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.

#### HEARING THE WORD OF GOD.

*Take heed therefore how ye hear.*—LUKE VIII. 18.

IN the last discourse but one I distributed the principal means of grace under the following heads:

I. *The preaching of the gospel;*

II. *The reading of the Scriptures;*

III. *Prayer;*

IV. *Correspondence with religious men;*

V. *Religious meditation; particularly self-examination;* and,

VI. *The religious education of children.*

In that discourse also I endeavoured to exhibit the *influence* of these means in the work of salvation.

The next object which I propose is, a *separate consideration of these several subjects;* that their respective efficacy may be more particularly displayed. It will be remembered that they are all here to be considered *as means, in the application of which holiness is originally communicated,* as well as *means of improving in holiness.*

The direction in the text is, I apprehend, a direction given to all men who are in possession of the gospel. It is delivered in the most general terms; and may therefore be regarded as extending to every mode of hearing which is useful. There are modes of hearing which, unless I am deceived, are *eventually* useful to sinners; and in which *the gospel* becomes to sinners *the power of God unto salvation.* I shall consider these modes as included in it; modes in which I should wish a sinful child of my own, and for the same reason should wish others also, to hear the gospel. Such as have heard in these modes, have in great multitudes, as I verily believe, been profited in a degree which no man can estimate.

The persons who in this sense would *take heed how they hear* the gospel, by which I intend the Scriptures at large, ought while they hear to remember the following things.

1. *That the gospel is the word of God.*

To prevent any misapprehension, I wish it to be kept steadily in view, that no attention or reverence is here claimed to preaching, any farther than the gospel is preached. To the mere opinions and declarations of a preacher, as such, no other respect is due, than that which by common consent is rendered to the opinions and declarations of all men of similar understanding and worth. *The best opinions of men are merely useful, wholesome advice. The Scriptures are a law; possessed of divine authority and obligation.* So far as the doctrines, precepts, and ordinances, of the Scrip

tures are preached, they claim the reverence which they themselves have challenged.

The solemn remembrance, that the Scriptures are the word of God, involves a variety of interesting considerations.

*In this character particularly they come home to us as the word of him by whom we were created, and by whom we are preserved and governed.* From this great and glorious Being, all that we have, and all that we hope for, is and must be derived. We are his property; and are rightfully disposed of, and rightfully required to dispose of ourselves, according to his pleasure. In the Scriptures alone is this pleasure made known to us. In them alone therefore we learn the proper destination of our faculties, our services, and ourselves. The law by which we are here required to do his pleasure, is invested with all possible authority and obligation; and demands our reverence and obedience in a manner supremely impressive.

*As the word of God also, the Scriptures are dictated by his wisdom, goodness, and truth.* They are the word of him who cannot mistake, deceive, nor injure. Consequently they contain *all things necessary for life and godliness;* whatever we need to know, and whatever we ought to do, for the attainment of his approbation. On their entire wisdom and integrity, their fitness to promote the great purpose for which they were written, and their conduciveness to it in ourselves, we are wholly to rely. Not a doubt can be reasonably entertained concerning the truth of the doctrines, the soundness of the precepts, or the sincerity of the promises. Nor are we any more to distrust the certainty of the threatenings, or the reality of those awful dangers which they disclose. We are bound on the one hand not to question the truth, and on the other not to dispute the wisdom and goodness, of that which is revealed. *All things which this sacred book contains, are to be received as they are.* Our own opinions are implicitly to bow before them: and we are ever to be ready to believe, that what we think *the foolishness of God is wiser than men;* than all the substituted opinions of ourselves or others. *Let God be true,* ought to be our invariable language, *but every man,* who opposes his declarations, *a liar.*

Against this great and awful Being we have rebelled

Hence, although he is our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, he still regards our moral character with abhorrence. *The Scriptures therefore are published to us as the word of an offended God.* Hence are derived all those denunciations of anger and punishment found in them; which could have no place in the will of God as revealed to obedient creatures.

*As the word of God, the Scriptures announce to us, that, notwithstanding our rebellion, he is willing to be reconciled to us.* We are therefore ever to remember, that *they are the word of the Father, and of the Redeemer, and of the Sanctifier of mankind.* In these venerable and amiable characters, God appears to us with infinite tenderness and endearment. His word is thus presented to us as the pleasure of the best of all friends, and the most affectionate of all parents. In our ruined condition he beheld us with boundless mercy; and, unasked and undesired, undertook to rescue us from destruction. For this end the Saviour came into the world, lived a life of humiliation, and died a death of anguish and infamy. For this end the Spirit of truth came into the world, to convince, renew, and purify, the hearts of mankind. *Of these three persons in the one* JEHOVAH, *the Scriptures are the word;* willed by the Father, dictated by the Son, and inspired by the Holy Ghost.

*As the word of God, the Scriptures are the word of him on whom we daily depend for life, and breath, and all things.* Whatever we enjoy he gives; whatever we hope for must, if enjoyed at all, be also given by him. Without him we are *poor, and miserable, and in want of all things.* With his favour we shall be *rich* indeed, *and have need of nothing.*

*The Scriptures are also the word of him by whom we shall be judged and rewarded.* The day is hastening when we shall be called to an account for all our conduct; and shall be compelled to rehearse it before him. If we have done well; if we have obeyed, worshipped, and glorified him, and *served our generation according to his will;* we shall be acquitted in this great trial, and received to everlasting glory. If we have done evil, and refused to do good, we shall be driven away to final and irremediable perdition.

Whenever we are assembled to hear the gospel, we are to remember, that with reference to all these solemn things, it is the word of God.

2. *That we are sinners who infinitely need forgiveness and salvation.*

As sinners we are irreversibly condemned by that divine law which we have broken, and by that just government against which we have rebelled. *The soul that sinneth shall die,* was the original sentence of that law to mankind; the sentence of him who can neither deceive nor change. The sentence will therefore be executed in its strict meaning on all who disobey, and who do not become interested in the redemption of Christ. Under such a sentence, infinitely dreadful and unalterably certain, our danger is immensely great, and our ruin entire. From this sentence therefore we infinitely need a deliverance. Our all is at stake; and our souls are in a situation of the most terrible hazard. *Hell,* if we continue in this situation, *is open before us, and destruction hath no covering.*

It is impossible that any beings should be in a state of more absolute and pressing necessity. Rational, immortal, and incapable of perishing by annihilation, we must *be,* and be for ever. But to exist for ever, and yet to be sinful and miserable only, is a doom compared with which all other characters and sufferings lose their deformity and wretchedness, and rise into happiness and distinction. When we are present in the house of God, we should recall with deep affection this intense and melancholy necessity; and feel the declarations of Scripture with concern, suited to the inestimable importance of our situation.

3. *That the Scriptures are the book in which alone the terms and means of salvation are published.*

The word *gospel,* as you know, signifies *good tidings,* or *joyful news.* This name is given to the Scriptures generally, and to the New Testament particularly, because they contain the best of all tidings ever published to this ruined world. Independently of the gospel, all the race of Adam are under a sentence of condemnation, without a friend, and without a hope. To these forlorn and miserable beings, the infinitely merciful God has been pleased to make known a way of escape; a deliverance from destruction. This glorious communication is made to mankind in the Scriptures only. From no other source has man ever learned, that God is reconcilable on any terms; that sinners can be forgiven; that there is in the universe an atonement for sin;

or that any atonement will be accepted. From no other source have we been informed, that God will be pleased with any worship which we can render; or if he will, what that worship is. Without the Scriptures, we know not that the connexion between God and man, between heaven and earth, can be renewed; or that the gates which admit intelligent beings to the world of enjoyment, have been or ever will be opened to apostate creatures.

To beings in circumstances of such necessity and danger, tidings even of partial deliverance must be delightful. But these are tidings of complete deliverance from sin, and of an entire escape from misery. To beings left in absolute ignorance of reconciliation to God, and in absolute despair of future enjoyment: to whom the world of happiness was shut, and to whom the ages of eternity rolled onward no bright reversion; even the uncertain rumour of relief must, one would imagine, echo throughout every region of the globe which they inhabited, and thrill with inexpressible emotions in every heart. But these are certain tidings from God himself concerning this glorious possession; from the God who cannot deceive; the God whose promises endure for ever.

*This great salvation is however proffered by God on his own terms only.* In the same Scriptures are these terms found. From them alone can we learn on what conditions we may obtain life and escape from death. *The way of holiness,* to which the gospel alone directs us, *is* there made *a highway; and wayfaring men, though fools,* need *not err therein.*

*In the Scriptures also are the means of this divine and immortal attainment presented to our view.* Here we are taught, that we become possessed of a title to everlasting life by faith, repentance, and holiness. Here also is pointed out the way in which these indispensable characteristics are communicated; *viz.* the means of grace already mentioned in these discourses. Both the means and the terms are eminently reasonable and desirable; in themselves real and superior good, and the way to greater good; easy of adoption and use, and, with the divine blessing, efficacious to the end for which they are used; sanctioned with supreme authority by the testimony of God, and daily confirmed by their actual influence on multitudes of mankind.

When therefore we hear the word of God, we are ever to remember, that we are taught things in this respect infinitely interesting to us, and incapable of being derived from any other source.

4. *That in order to be saved, we must understand the means and the terms of salvation.*

There is no other word of God but the Scriptures; and beside God there is no other being who can inform us *what we must do to be saved.* Philosophers may investigate and write from generation to generation; this vast momentous subject has ever lain, and will ever lie, beyond their reach. Those who read and understood the instructions of the ancient philosophers, were never reformed by their doctrines. Those who read and understand the moral systems of infidel philosophers, are never amended by them, but corrupted of course. The Scriptures, on the contrary, have been the means of renewing and reforming millions of the human race. But this sacred book was never of the least use to any man, by whom it was not in some good measure understood. To enable mankind at large to understand it, God instituted the evangelical ministry. All complicated objects of the intellect are far better known by sober reflection and diligent research, than they can be by casual or cursory thinking. The Scriptures contain a system immensely complicated. They demand therefore the most patient, persevering study, and thorough investigation. Hence ministers, consecrated originally to this employment, are commanded *to give themselves wholly to the ministry;* particularly *to reading, and to meditation;* that they may not be *novices*, nor furnish reasons to others for regarding their discourses with contempt. But all their labours will be to no purpose, unless those who hear them understand their discourses, however evangelically and usefully they may be written. Every hearer therefore should solemnly call to mind, in the house of God, that the means and terms of eternal life then are published to him; that they are found no where but in the Scriptures; and that the Scriptures can be of no benefit to him, unless he understands them. His highest interest, and indispensable duty, demand of him, therefore, that he should hear as for his life.

It ought to be added, that all those things are not only

explained in the Scriptures, but enforced on the heart with supreme power and efficacy. Motives of amazing import are here represented to persuade the sinner to repentance. Alarms compel; invitations allure; threatenings terrify; and promises encourage; of such a nature, and exhibited in such a manner, as boundless wisdom and goodness thought best fitted to affect the heart. But all these also are in vain, unless heard, understood, and realized, by the sinner.

5. *We are farther to remember, that our opportunities of hearing the word of God are few; and that that which we are enjoying is not improbably the best which will ever arrive.*

Our *life* itself is but *a vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.* Of this life, the opportunities of hearing the gospel compose only a little part. The sabbath is almost the only season allotted to this end; a seventh part merely of our time; and, as actually enjoyed by us, a much less proportion. By the weakness of childhood, the thoughtlessness of youth, and the hinderances of riper years, the number of sabbaths which we are able to employ in gaining salvation is greatly reduced. If those which we lose in this manner by negligence, and by devotion to the world, be taken from the whole number, we shall find those which remain fewer by far than we are usually aware: few in themselves; few especially, for so great and important a work.

How many sabbaths remain to us at any time, we can in no degree conjecture. That the number must be small, and that it may be still smaller, we know; but whether the present sabbath be not the last, we can never know. Were we assured that it was the last, with what anxiety, care, and diligence, should we devote it to the attainment of endless life! As it may be the last, it ought to be regarded with the same anxiety. Whether it be or be not the last, it is unquestionably the best opportunity that we shall enjoy.

It is in our possession; all others are merely expected. It is the sabbath on which we are less hardened and less guilty than we shall ever be at any future period. God is now reconcilable. Before another sabbath arrives, he may cast us off. His own command is, *To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts. Behold now,* says St. Paul,

*is the accepted time! Behold, now is the day of salvation!* Whenever therefore we are assembled to hear the word of God upon the sabbath, we should solemnly feel, that we possess the best opportunity of obtaining everlasting life which we shall ever enjoy.

6. *We are also to remember, that the Scriptures are the word by which we shall be finally judged. Whosoever sins ye remit,* saith our Saviour to his apostles, *they are remitted; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.*

In other words, "I commission you to publish the terms of life and death to mankind. He whose life shall be condemned by the terms which by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost I will enable you to announce, shall be condemned by me in the judgment. On the contrary, him whose life shall be approved by these terms, I will approve at the final day." All these terms of remitting and retaining sin, as published by the apostles, we now have in the gospel; and they are continually preached in the house of God. How infinitely important is it, that they should be infixed in our understanding, our memory, and our hearts; that we may always know, remember, and feel them; that they may be the source and the guide of all our conduct; and that by them we may, in the end, not only be judged, but justified also, and rewarded!

Let every person then, who is present at the preaching of the gospel, call to mind, that he is hearing the very terms of his final acquittal or condemnation. Let him also remember, that one of the grounds of that sentence, which he will receive from *the Judge of the quick and the dead,* will be, that he is then *taking heed how he hears;* or that he is refusing or neglecting to perform this solemn duty.

7. *We are to remember, that God is present to observe the manner in which we hear.*

This consideration is of infinite moment; and ought with supreme force to come home to every heart. Let me beseech every member of this assembly to think, how great and awful a being God is. Remember how absolutely you are indebted to him for *life, and breath, and all things* which you have enjoyed; and how entirely you depend upon him for every thing which you hope to enjoy either in this world or that which is to come. Remember how grossly you have sinned against him, by violating his holy law; and how

mercifully he has invited you to repent, and return to your obedience. Think how aggravated will be the guilt of refusing to return, when thus invited; how entirely you are in his hands; and how impossible it is, that you should escape from his power.

Realize, that *his eye, as a flame of fire,* pervades and enlightens all the secret retreats of the workers of iniquity; and that he sees and records every wandering, stupid, worldly, and disobedient thought. Remember, that he will require you to rehearse before him the manner in which you hear his word this day.

How immensely interesting are these considerations to every person in this assembly! Who, in a full and realizing, who, even in the most imperfect and casual, view of them, can fail with supreme solicitude to *take heed how he hears?*

8. *As all things contained in the Scriptures are wise, and right, and good; so we are to remember, that they are worthy of all acceptation.*

My audience may remember, that I originally proposed to consider the manner in which *sinners may hear the gospel* with rational hopes of being benefited by it. The hearing of the gospel I exhibited as one of the means of grace; and mentioned that I should discuss it as such, and not as a theme of general investigation. To this view of the subject I have therefore confined myself; and have purposely omitted many observations, which might be usefully made, concerning this subject to persons who are already Christians. Almost all the observations which I have made, are indeed in their full force applicable to them also. To sinners they are all applicable; and are all in every sense in their power while they continue sinners. The *last* is as truly of this nature as those which preceded it.

Every sinner may, antecedently to his regeneration, entertain a full conviction, that the Scriptures are worthy of all acceptation. With this conviction solemnly impressed on the mind every sinner may hear the gospel. Every sinner may also feel this truth in a strong and affecting manner. Awakened to a sense of his guilt and danger, he does thus actually feel, antecedently to any essential change in his moral character. But what *some* sinners *do* feel, *all*

*others may* feel. But under this conviction, and this sense, all those are sanctified who are sanctified at all. With these very views of divine truth upon their minds, the Spirit of God communicates to them, I do not mean to every one, who is in this situation; for this I am not warranted to say, nor to believe; but to most of them, perhaps to all who do not voluntarily relinquish their convictions; that change of heart which is commonly styled regeneration: a change infinitely important to every child of Adam.

*Faith*, says St. Paul, *cometh by hearing*. I have endeavoured to describe the manner of hearing in which it comes. It is to be still carefully remembered, that unless faith is actually obtained and exercised, no mode of hearing whatever will ultimately be of any value. The mode which I have pointed out is, in my apprehension, inestimably valuable, as means eminently useful to this great end.

What is true of hearing the gospel is substantially true of *reading it*; and of *reading* also *other religious books*. The Scriptures particularly, and other religious books generally, are to be read with great care; and with all the views which I have expressed; that we may able to judge whether those who preach to us preach the truth of God. They are to be read also, that we may keep alive, and in full force, the impressions communicated by preaching. Finally, they are to be read, that we may gain the full advantages of all our opportunities between the returns of the sabbath; and furnish ourselves with daily instruction, with reproofs for our daily sins, with encouragement to our daily duties, and with powerful motives to a daily progress in the divine life.

## REMARKS.

1. *From these observations it is evident, that those who do not hear in the manner which has been described, are even, according to their own principles, wholly inexcusable.*

All persons present at the preaching of the gospel can, if they please, solemnly remember, that *it is the word of God*; that *they are sinners, who infinitely need salvation*; that *in the gospel only, the terms and means of salvation are published to mankind*; that *these, in order to be of any use to them, must be applied to by themselves*; that *their eternal*

*tunities of hearing it are few;* and that *the present is the best, and may be the last, which they will ever enjoy;* that *the Scriptures contain all the rules of life by which they will be judged;* that *God is an eye-witness of the manner in which they hear;* and that *the gospel is worthy of all acceptation, and ought therefore to be received with the heart, as well as with the understanding.* To hear in this manner demands no especial communication from God; and he who does not thus hear, is stripped of the pretence even of self-justification. It is indeed equally the duty of every man to hear with evangelical faith. But as this faith is the gift of God, unrenewed men are ever prone to feel themselves, in some degree, excusable in neglecting to hear with this exercise of the heart. This apprehension is, I acknowledge, entirely without foundation. Still it exists. But in the present case, on their own ground, no plea can be offered which will even satisfy themselves. Let them therefore, when guilty of this negligence, lay their hands upon their mouths, and their mouths in the dust, and confess their guilt before God.

Of this miserable class of sinners, not a small number are, sabbath by sabbath, seen in this house. Almost all who assemble here, are in the morning of life; when, if ever, the heart is tender, and easily susceptible of divine impressions from the word of God. Almost all enjoy also the peculiar blessings of a liberal and religious education, and the best opportunities of knowing their duty and their danger. Still, in defiance of the solemn commands of religion, and the authority of God, as well as of common decency, there are those who quietly lay their heads down to sleep when the prayer is ended, or the psalm read. These persons are indeed present in the house of God; but they are present only to insult him; to cast contempt upon the cross of Christ, and to grieve in the most shameful manner the Spirit of grace. They can hardly be said to hear at all. They come into the presence of God merely to declare to him, and to all who are present, that they will not hear nor obey his voice, and to *treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the judgment.* Let them remember, that the God who made them, and in whose hand their breath is, is here; and that his all-searching eye is fixed, with an intense and dreadful survey, upon their conduct,

and upon their hearts. Let them remember, that he hath said, *Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and ye have not regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind. Then shall ye call, but I will not answer. Ye shall seek me early, and shall not find me; because ye hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord.*

Let those also, who with more decency and more momentary wisdom, really hear, and yet with the slightest temptations forget what they hear; vessels into which the water of life is poured only to be poured out again; remember, that they hear to no valuable end. The true end of this privilege is, *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.* This end they prevent in themselves by an absolute destitution of serious and deep concern for their salvation. In their final ruin they will find little comfort in remembering this frail, feeble attention to the word of God. It will be a melancholy support in that terrible day, to say to their Judge, *We have eaten and drunk in thy presence; and thou hast taught in our streets:* when they hear him reply, *Depart from me, for I know you not, ye workers of iniquity.*

2. *How infinitely desirable is it, that we should hear with good and honest hearts!*

This, and this only, is obeying in the proper sense the command of our Saviour. As the gospel is plainly *worthy of all acceptation,* to accept it in this manner is the indispensable duty of every man to whom it is preached. To this end we should remember, that our all is depending; our virtue, usefulness, and peace, in the present life; our hope and support in death; our acquittal in the judgment; our escape from final perdition; and our introduction to eternal glory in the kingdom of our heavenly Father. What dreadful emotions must every careless, stupid sinner experience on a death-bed, when he calls to mind that he squandered with infinite prodigality all his opportunities of gaining salvation; and cast away the blessings of comfort and hope for ever! Amid the solemn scenes of such a bed, when life is trembling and fluttering over the abyss of destruction; the pulse forgetting to beat; the soul struggling and cling-

ing to its tenement of clay, with awful anticipations of the judgment; how overwhelming must it be to remember, that every prayer and sermon, that the gospel itself, and all the blessings which it contains, although so frequently offered by God with infinite kindness, were only despised, neglected, and forgotten! But the lamp is now gone out, the oil expended, and the door shut. Nothing, therefore, remains to the infatuated votary of sense and sin, but *the blackness of darkness for ever!*

# SERMON CXXXIX.

## THE ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE.

### THE NATURE, SEASONS, AND OBLIGATIONS, OF PRAYER.

*Pray without ceasing.*—1 THESS. v. 17.

THE preceding discourse was occupied by considerations on the two first of those means of grace which were formerly mentioned, *viz.* The *preaching and hearing of the gospel,* and the *reading of the Scriptures and other religious books.* I shall now proceed to the examination of the third of those means; *viz. prayer.*

In this examination I shall depart from the scheme which was pursued in the preceding discourse; and shall consider the subject generally, under the following heads:

I. *The nature,* and,
II. *The seasons, of prayer;*
III. *The obligations to pray;*
IV. *The usefulness of prayer;*
V. *The encouragements to it;* and,
VI. *The objections usually made against it.*

I. *I shall briefly consider the nature of prayer.*

Prayer, according to the language of the Westminster catechism, is the *offering up our desires to God for things agreeable to his will in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and a thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.* This definition is undoubtedly just; yet it is in a degree

defective. Prayer is an act of worship, consisting of four great parts; *adoration, confession, petition,* and *thanksgiving.*

The first of these, *adoration,* consists in solemnly reciting the character of God; and in reverentially ascribing to him the glory due to his name for the infinite perfections which he possesses, and for all the manifestations which he has made of himself in his word, and in his works.

The second, *confession,* demands no comment.

The third, *petition,* is both by reason and revelation confined to *things which are agreeable to the will of God.* His will involves whatever is right and good; and nothing which is not agreeable to it is in reality desirable.

*Thanksgiving,* the last of these subjects, is so generally and so well understood, as to need no explanation at the present time.

All these are to be offered up to God *in the name of Christ,* in obedience to his express command. Unless they are so offered they cannot, under the Christian dispensation, be accepted.

II. *The principal seasons of prayer are the following.*

1. *The sabbath.*

On this holy day we are required to devote ourselves to this duty in a peculiar manner. A prime part of the religious service to which it is destined consists of prayer. For this reason the sanctuary is appropriately styled the *house of prayer.* Thus God says, in Isaiah, *I will make them joyful in my house of prayer:* and again, *My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.* These promises immediately respect Christian nations; and teach in the clearest manner the proper destination of the house of God, and of the day upon which especially it is occupied by religious assemblies. The Jewish church worshipped in this manner on *their sabbath;* and the primitive Christian church on *the Lord's day.* These examples have been followed, in every age of Christianity, by those who in any country have worn the Christian name.

Nor is the sabbath a season of *public* prayer only. It is equally to be employed in *private* prayer. On this sacred day God has required a peculiar attention to all our religious duties, at home, as well as in the sanctuary. Every advantage for this purpose is furnished by this heavenly season. The consecration of this holy day, by the fourth

command, by his own resting upon the first sabbath, and by the resurrection of the Redeemer; the celebration of it by the church in all the ages of time; the blessing originally annexed to it; and the sanctification acquired and increased in the minds of many millions of the human race, all unite to designate it as being pre-eminently the season of prayer. With these affecting views of the sabbath, all others conspire. On this day mankind assemble in the house of God, as brethren and as children of the same divine Parent, to worship their Creator; to learn his holy will; and to obtain a title to endless life. Here, with one united voice, they confess their sins before him. Hither they come, to acknowledge their dependance on him for the communication of every blessing, and the fulfilment of every hope. Here, they stand as mere suppliants for mercy, for the forgiveness of their sins, and the renovation of their souls. Hither they come to be employed only in religious thoughts, affections, and pursuits; to act as spiritual and immortal beings; and to appear as candidates for everlasting life. Here, the word of God is presented to them as a law, immutable and eternal, which they have violated, and by which they are condemned; as the news and means of restoration to safety, hope, and life; as the manifestation of his character and our own; and as the tidings of a future resurrection, judgment, and immortality. Hither they come, on this sacred day, into the immediate presence of God, as the reconcilable Father of mankind; infinitely great, venerable, and lovely, in his character. Here, they behold the Saviour in all his peculiar glory and beauty, his transcendent compassion and self-denial. His condescension and humiliation, his preaching and miracles, his sufferings and death, his resurrection and exaltation, are here presented in his word and ordinances, pencilled by the hand of JEHOVAH.

This holy season is the day appointed by God himself, as a perpetual festival for the commemoration of these glorious things; especially of the creation and redemption of mankind; and of the divine perfections manifested in these wonderful works. As such a festival it is regarded and acknowledged by all who assemble for his worship.

To all these things the strong power of sympathy lends an interest, a solemnity, a capacity, for affecting the soul, unrivalled in its nature, and attainable in no other situation.

As on the sabbath these things are eminently felt in the house of God; so the spirit imbibed here is extended to every thing of the same nature, when contemplated in our own dwellings. Thither we carry the feelings originated in the sanctuary; and there we prolong the views which the sabbath has already inspired. In both places therefore we are furnished with advantages for praying fervently and acceptably at this happy season, which obviously make the sabbath, by way of distinction, the day of prayer.

2. *Such occasional days as are warranted by the word of God, and appointed by the rulers of mankind, for public worship, are also important seasons of prayer.*

Public annual festivals for national thanksgiving, and public days of national humiliation and prayer, were enjoined by God upon the Israelites; the only nation to whom, as such, he ever gave laws and institutions. The institutions and laws of Moses are binding on us no farther than as they are applicable to our circumstances. Political and ceremonial branches of this system are not, and cannot be, applicable to the state of any modern or Christian nation. They are therefore abrogated, as we are amply assured in the Scriptures themselves. But these national thanksgivings and fasts are no less applicable to the state of other nations, than to that of the Israelites. For all nations equally with them have sins to be confessed and lamented, and blessings to be remembered and acknowledged. God also has been pleased to regard, in a favourable and merciful manner, public fasts not directly appointed by himself. Thus when the Ninevites, alarmed by the prediction of Jonah, kept a day of solemn humiliation and fasting for their sins, God *repented of the evil that he said he would do unto them*, and he did it not. In consequence of the fast also of the Jews in Shushan, on account of the ruin threatened to their nation by the malicious fraud of Haman, God accomplished their deliverance in a manner equally wonderful and glorious. Important blessings seem also to have been given in consequence of the fasts proclaimed severally by Ezra and Nehemiah. The public services of these days are usually the same with those of the sabbath. Prayer particularly is a prime part of them all. On such days the ancient churches assembled to acknowledge the goodness of God to them, and to confess and lament their sins against

him. In these religious solemnities they have been followed extensively by the church in later times.

3. *The morning and evening of every day are in a peculiar manner seasons of prayer.*

This truth was taught directly by the morning and evening sacrifice, under the Mosaic dispensation. Aaron and the succeeding high-priests were commanded, Exod. xxx. 7, *to burn incense on the altar of incense every morning.* See also Exod. xxxvi. 3; Exod. xli; Levit. vi. 12. In like manner the evening sacrifice and oblation are often mentioned; as in 1 Kings xviii. 29; 2 Kings xvi. 15; Ezra ix. 4; and Dan. ix. 21.

In conformity to the language of this institution, David declares, that he steadily performed this religious duty every morning, and every evening, and also at noon every day. Daniel prayed to his God *three times a day.* Job also offered sacrifice in the morning. In the same manner, unquestionably, worshipped all the pious men of ancient times.

With the Scriptures the nature of the case perfectly accords. In the morning we are solemnly called upon to remember the protection which God has extended to us through the night: a season in which we were wholly unable to protect ourselves. We are required to recollect also, that he has graciously given us the blessing of sleep, and the peace and safety with which we have rested upon our beds. He who does not praise God for these indispensable gifts, must be alike ungrateful and stupid.

In the morning also we are about to enter upon the business of the day; and stand therefore in absolute need of the divine protection, favour, and blessing. How wretched should we be, and how useless, unless our food and raiment, our health and strength, our reason and all our other useful faculties, were continued in our possession! Equally do we need security against temptation and sin, danger and harm. But for all these we are entirely dependant on God alone.

In the evening we are solemnly obligated to remember with the deepest gratitude the blessings of the day. These are the blessings which we supplicated in the morning; and which God has been pleased to bestow upon us, notwithstanding our sins. In the evening also, we are about to lay ourselves down to sleep. Beside him we have no protec-

tor; and to him we must be indebted both for the sleep itself, and for the peace and safety without which it cannot be enjoyed.

Stated and regular seasons are indispensable to the effectual performance of business. Method, proverbially styled *the soul of business*, cannot exist without such seasons. Irregularity, which is the prevention or the ruin of all valuable efforts, grows of course out of irregular distributions of time. That which is done at accidental seasons only, is ultimately not done at all. No business demands regularity and method more than prayer. There is in all men naturally a strong indisposition to pray. Stated seasons therefore, returning at regular periods, are peculiarly necessary to preserve this duty in its full vigour. He who prays at such seasons, will always remember this duty; will form his schemes of life so as to provide the proper places for performing it; will be reproached by his conscience for neglecting it; will keep alive the spirit of prayer from one season to another, so as to render the practice delightful; and will be preserved, uninterruptedly, in the practice by the strong influence of habit. He who prays at accidental seasons only, will first neglect, then hate, and finally desist from, this duty.

The morning and evening are seasons peculiarly fitted for the regular returns of prayer. They occur at intervals perfectly convenient; terminate successively our sleep and our labour; are seasons necessarily distinguished; remind us regularly of all that for which we should pray; and are effectual means of establishing in us immoveable habits of praying. They involve every thing therefore which can be either asked or wished for this interesting purpose.

As these are seasons eminently advantageous for secret prayer; so they are almost the only possible seasons for the united devotion of families. Then, and then only, are all the members customarily present. Then the family business is either not begun or ended; and all are at leisure to employ themselves in the worship of God. Strangers then do not intrude: and in this manner prevent the performance of the duty. Every thing therefore concurs at these seasons to promote and establish the method, regularity, and habit, which, necessary always, are indispensable where numbers are concerned.

4. *The times, at which we receive our food are proper seasons of prayer.*

On food we depend for the continuance of life; and, of course, for the enjoyment of all other temporal good. On this blessing also, depends in the like manner the continuance of our approbation; and, therefore, all our future spiritual good, so far as it will be gained in the present world. With this good are inseparably connected also, those immortal blessings which God will communicate as its proper reward beyond the grave. Hence the communication of this blessing demands of us peculiar attention, gratitude, and acknowledgments.

These, accordingly, the Scriptures require every where at our hands. *Every creature of God*, say they, *is good, if it be received with thanksgiving.* They inform us also, that it is *sanctified by the word of God*, that is, his express permission to use it, *and by prayer.* They farther teach us, that *God created meats to be received with thanksgiving by them who believe and know the truth.* In these passages they teach us, that meats were created for this end, that they should be received by us with thanksgiving; and that, if they are not thus received, the end of their creation is not accomplished; that they are not good, when not thus received; and that they are not sanctified without prayer. The Scriptures also direct us, that *whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do all to the glory of God.* But when we receive our food, whatever emotions we may experience within, we cannot glorify God before our fellowmen, except by asking for his blessing upon it, and rendering to him our praise for the bounty by which it is daily supplied.

In conformity with these precepts, David often solemnly praises God for the communication of this blessing to himself; and calls upon all mankind to unite in the praise. The primitive Christians are exhibited by St. Paul as *eating and giving God thanks;* or, in other words, as *giving God thanks* when they received their food. Our Saviour, the perfect example to all his followers, blessed the food provided for himself and those around him, to teach us, that it is our duty always to ask that blessing of God upon our own meals, without which they cannot be either useful or desirable enjoyments. The same glorious person also

gave thanks uniformly to God for the bounties of his providence, to shew us, that we are always to remember, with gratitude and praise, the divine goodness in supplying our wants, and in thus prolonging our lives. From this glorious example, and these most reasonable precepts, are derived ample proofs of this important duty, and the most powerful motives to perform, invariably, faithfully, and with sincere delight, so desirable a service.

The very Heathen were so sensible of the propriety and obligation of this duty, as enjoined by the religion of nature, that to a great extent they steadily made libations to their gods before their meals, as an acknowledgment of their indebtedness to them for their daily food. He therefore who in a Christian country neglects to praise God for his own food, cannot with propriety be called a Heathen. He may with more fitness be styled an animal. Nay, in some respects, he degrades himself below the brutes. *For the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but he doth not know, nor even consider.*

5. *Beside these regular seasons of prayer, there are many others continually occurring, which can be designated by no general name.*

The times at which all peculiar blessings are bestowed on us, are times of prayer. Whenever we are successful in any important concern, and are especially prospered, supported, or comforted: whenever we or ours are delivered from trouble or want, pain or sickness: whenever we escape from peculiar temptations; are placed in safety; and furnished with strength, peace, hope, and joy, with the peculiar blessings of Christian fellowship, the rectification of our views, and the improvement of our religious affections, we are especially summoned to the duties of prayer and thanksgiving.

In the same manner is prayer our especial duty at those seasons in which we are peculiarly distressed in body or in mind; are in peculiar danger; are exposed peculiarly to temptations; are sick; are bereaved of beloved friends; are threatened with alarming evils; or whenever we find ourselves the subjects of peculiar sloth, reluctance to our duty, or ready to repine at the dispensations of God's providence, or to distrust his faithfulness or his mercy.

Nor are we less obviously called to the duties of prayer and thanksgiving by the peculiar prosperity or distresses, the dangers or deliverances, of our country. I speak not here of this duty as performed in public. I refer immediately to the performances of the closet. No man can safely or warrantably neglect the interests of his country in his secret devotions. As its interests ought ever to be near his heart; so they ought ever to be remembered when he comes into the presence of God.

In the same manner, the great concerns of the church of God ought continually to be subjects of fervent supplication. *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,* saith the Psalmist, *let my right hand forget her cunning: if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.* All the wants and woes, all the blessings and consolations, of the church of God, should be felt as the personal concerns of every Christian; and, as such, should ascend up in his daily devotions before the throne of his Maker. I only add, that both reason and revelation have made it our plain duty to pray for all men. At the times also when we ourselves commence any important business, journey, or other undertaking, which is of particular consequence to our well-being, we are required to begin our efforts with humble petitions for the guidance, protection, and blessing, of God.

Retirement likewise, and solitude, the lonely walk, the chamber of meditation, and the peaceful pillow, being peculiarly friendly to this solemn employment, summon us to it with peculiar motives.

Of these occasions generally, whether alluded to or specified, it is to be observed, that they return more or less every day, run through life, and end only at death. All of them demand either silent or audible acknowledgments of our constant dependance on God, and our absolute indebtedness to him for all good. They demand a lively sense of his presence, perfection, and government, our supreme love, and unchanging confidence, to be exercised towards him; our daily communion with him, and our entire devotion to his service. Of all these prayer is the vehicle, the support, the soul. With it they will live and flourish; without it they will die. According to these observations the text directs us to *pray without ceasing.* In the same manner, the apostle elsewhere directs us to *pray always with*

*all prayer; and in every thing to make known our requests unto God, with supplication and thanksgiving.* In this manner the prophets and saints of the Old Testament, and the apostles and Christians of the New, lived before God. Prayer was the breath by which their piety was supported and preserved. Thus lived Christ himself; and thus by his example he has taught *us* to live. Immediately before he ordained his apostles, he spent the whole night in prayer; and this was a characteristical specimen of his life. *Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ.*

III. *I shall now briefly consider our obligations to perform this duty.*

1. *To pray to God is a natural dictate of the human mind; a dictate of conscience and common sense.*

We are absolutely dependant on God for all good. To know this, is to know a truth of immense importance to the moral system at large, and to each individual of which this system is composed. To feel it with acquiescence and joy, is to conform in our feelings to that state of things which is agreeable to the will of God, and of course to absolute rectitude. We are bound to delight in such a dependance on the glorious and perfect JEHOVAH; infinitely great, and wise, and good, as he is; and able and disposed as he is to supply all our wants, and to furnish us with every real blessing.

But a spirit of dependance is more awakened, cherished, and preserved, by prayer, than by all things else. But to cherish and preserve it in our minds is the indispensable duty and the supreme interest of man. Few things contribute in the same degree, to render us excellent, amiable, or approved by God. Without it we can neither be approved, amiable, nor excellent. In this view, therefore, the importance of prayer cannot be estimated.

Prayer is also the only method which nature points out of obtaining blessings from God. To prayer, as this method, we are directed by our earliest circumstances in childhood. By asking we originally expect to gain, and actually gain, all the blessings which are given to us by our parents. What they grant to our petitions, common sense directs us to hope from God, in answer to similar petitions. From analogy, which is fairly presumed to be conclusive, we determine, that the mode of obtaining good,

which his providence has formed for our direction with respect to earthly parents and benefactors, is the mode which we ought to pursue, whenever we seek to obtain good immediately from him, our heavenly Parent and divine Benefactor. As this conduct is universal, it is justly concluded to be natural. For we have no higher proof that any thing is natural, than the fact, that it exists in all men of all ages and nations.

The Heathen universally prayed. Of this service their worship was in a great measure constituted. From California to Japan we find this every where its leading feature; and from the first periods recorded in history to the present time. There are but two sources whence this conduct can have been derived: the conclusions of reason, and the dictates of revelation. If it was derived from reason, then it was demanded by reason; if from revelation, then it is required by God.

2. *What nature has thus dictated and pursued, the Scriptures have expressly enjoined.*

It will be unnecessary for me to multiply quotations on this subject. The text and the other passages already recited, are more than sufficient to settle the point, were it at all in dispute. But no truth is better known, or more abundantly acknowledged. I shall therefore only observe, that these commands are invested with all the authority of God.

3. *The example of Christ is of the same obligatory force.*

Christ, as is well known, lived a life of continual and extraordinary prayer; and thus accorded with that general prediction in the eighty-ninth psalm, *He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father and my God, and the Rock of my salvation.* Accordingly St. Paul testifies of him, Heb. v. 7, that *in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death; and was heard in that he feared.* This example, you know, is not only a pattern and a motive; but a law also, binding us with divine authority.

1. *Our own well-being may with strict propriety be added to these obligations as a reason of high and commanding import.*

God has taught us, that he will be *inquired of* by mankind *for the good* which he is pleased to bestow upon them. The only promise that he will give or that we shall receive blessings, is made to such as ask. *Ask, and ye shall receive;*

*seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you;* is the only language of revelation concerning this subject. Supplication for good therefore is the only condition upon which it can be hoped. But we entirely need, and God is infinitely able and disposed to give, all that is really good for us. To such as ask, he will give: from such as ask not, he will withhold. Of course, those who will not pray will never receive.

On our prayers then, according to the only ordinance of God with respect to this subject, all our good depends in one important sense, both for time and eternity. We may indeed, and we actually do, receive many things in this world, really good in themselves, for which we do not pray. But they are not, and so long as we neglect to pray will not be, good to us. To those who omit this duty, even the blessings bestowed by God cease to be blessings. Prayer purifies the heart for the reception of them; and removes the temptations which, good as they are in themselves, they cannot fail to present to the passions and appetites even of a religious man.

In eternity, those who in this world neglect to pray, will experience nothing which is in itself good; but will find, that as they refused to ask here, God will refuse to give for ever.

All these sources of obligation lend their whole force to all the seasons, occasions, and kinds, of prayer; to the public worship of the sabbath, and of authorized fasts and festivals; to the morning and evening sacrifice; to the religious service at our meals; and to the prayers offered up on the numberless occasions presented by our daily returning wants, sufferings, and enjoyments. On all these occasions they are accordingly to be felt, acknowledged, and obeyed. Of course we are to remember to feel, and willingly to feel, nay to feel with delight and gratitude, that it is our indispensable duty, our highest interest, and our glorious privilege, *to pray always, with all prayer and supplication, with giving of thanks: for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour. Amen.*

END OF VOL. IV.

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